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“This unconstitutional ban does not make an ounce of sense, and it is the kind of arbitrary voter suppression that we’re working to tear down right now before even more harm is done to our Democracy,” said DCCC Chairwoman Cheri Bustos in a statement announcing the lawsuit.

The unparalleled investments Texas Democrats are pouring into 2020 are in part a response to “the polarizing nature of the Trump presidency,” the memo reads. But they also reflect the zeal of the party to narrow their deficit in a state still in the GOP’s grip.

Democrats are banking on the Trump factor to boost their chances of further solidifying their foothold in November. The president roiled the political waters in Texas — and across the country — “destabilizing” the Republican majority in the state, according to political experts.

Democratic pick ups in 2020, said Cal Jillson, a professor of political science at Southern Methodist University, will be determined by long-term demographic changes, the number of open seats and whether “Trump is as destabilizing of the Republican coalition in 2020 as he was in 2018.”

“(The) declining Anglo-population is Republican and the rising minority population is Democrats, so that long term shift is endangering the traditional Republican majority,” Jillson told ABC News. “This partisan competition in Texas creates the opportunity for Democrats to pick up seats that they had not been competitive for in the past.”

In the most recent midterm elections, those factors cost Republicans “two U.S. House seats, two Texas Senate seats and 12 Texas House seats, as well as hundreds of local county races (and) city races,” he previously noted.

Texas has not elected a Democrat to statewide office since 1994. But in 2018, former Texas Congressman Beto O’Rourke received more votes than any Democrat has in the history of Texas in his competitive, upstart Senate bid against Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. And changing demographics within the state — including what FiveThirtyEight calls population growth “in and around the state’s cities” — suggest that Texas could be a key battleground in 2020.

While O’Rourke failed to find success in the Senate contest, the race between him and Cruz was the closest Texas has seen in recent decades. Republicans eked out a victory by three points, but O’Rourke carved a path for Democrats, making significant inroads for the party both statewide and lower on the ballot.

The Texas Democratic Party — already identifying their prime targets down the ballot — has set their sights on registering voters in a slate of state house districts, including 210,000 potential new Democrats in 12 districts that flipped in 2018, and 315,000 potential new Democrats in 18 targeted Texas Legislature districts for 2020.

Texas will see ‘battles all over the state’ in 2020

In mid-September, ahead of the Democratic presidential debate in Houston, Texas Democratic Party Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa told ABC News, “This debate is happening in Texas because the Democratic National Committee has determined that Texas is a battleground state. That being said, that makes Texas the biggest battleground state in the country.”

But still, Democrats are up against lofty challenges — Trump carried Texas by nine points in the 2016 presidential election, and some anticipate the incumbent will win it again.

"I expect Trump will carry Texas maybe by five or six points, instead of the nine he won it by last time," Jillson said.

While Democratic hopefuls might affirm the notion that the state is a battleground, Jillson said he sees the battle lines differently.

"Texas is a battleground state in places," he said. "And those places are the suburbs of the major cities of Texas. Texas itself is not a battleground state."

"There are battles all over the state, particularly in U.S. House races, and Texas House and Senate races," he continued. "There are battlegrounds all over the state, even if the state is not yet a battleground."

WFN: Texas Democrats Launch Largest Voter Registration Campaign To Hobble GOP's Grip

<https://wfn.com/abc-politics/texas-democrats-launch-largest-voter-registration-campaign-to-hobble-gops-grip/>
Posted 1/13/20

Texas Democrats, fueled by the party's nearly quarter-century-held dream of turning Texas blue, are mounting an aggressive ground-game operation with the largest voter registration program in the state's history, according to the state party, and an expansive voter protection effort ahead of the 2020 election.

The two-pronged campaign, which aims to add to the party's 2018 gains up and down the ballot, will target unregistered voters who they believe are potential new Democrats, and safeguard the right to vote for Texans, in partnership with Fair Fight 2020, the multi-million dollar initiative launched by Stacey Abrams, a Georgia Democrat who considered a bid for president and the U.S. Senate last year.

"The rapidly emerging Democratic coalition in Texas has set the stage for historic Democratic gains at the ballot box," Cliff Walker, the deputy executive director of the state party, said in a statement announcing the program. "We are committing our resources to register and engage a new electorate that is more progressive and represents the diversity of our great state. Shifting the electorate in Texas is our top priority."

For Abrams' group, Texas is one of the 20 battleground states that Fair Fight 2020 is targeting to promote voters' rights and fair election policies ahead of November. Fair Fight began investing resources in Texas last month.

"Fair Fight is proud to partner with the Texas Democratic Party to fund, train and support a robust voter protection initiative through our Fair Fight 2020 initiative," said Seth Bringman, a spokesman for Fair Fight. "Republicans in Texas have, for a long time, sought to make it harder to vote, particularly for voters of color, and it takes a dedicated voter protection team on the ground well before Election Day to make sure all Texans' voices can be heard."

At the core of the registration effort, which the state party says will be in collaboration with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the campaign arm for U.S. House Democrats, is an ambitious goal to register "a share of the estimated 2,600,000 Texans who are likely to vote Democratic," by using data-driven programs, deploying 1,000 field organizers and canvassers on the ground, and mailing hundreds of thousands of voter registration applications to unregistered voters across the state.

In a nine-page memo outlining their 2020 game plan on voter registration and protection, Walker and Lauren Pully, the state party's data and analytics director, contend that "in order to close the statewide gap and win in 2020, we must register and engage a new electorate that is more progressive and represents the diversity of our great state."

The second focus of their strategy — voter protection, access and ending voter suppression — will be bolstered by a number of initiatives spearheaded by the Texas Democratic Party, with the help of Fair Fight, among other national groups. Texas Democrats are expected to roll out more specifics on the protection effort at the end of the month, but in the coming week, the state party is launching a year-round voter assistance hotline for quick access to voting information and voting-related issues.

As part of the voter protection effort, the state party is also already moving forward on the legal front. Earlier this month, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, the DCCC, and Texas Democrats filed a lawsuit, part of an eight-figure investment across seven battleground states by the national groups, to challenge the electronic signature ban in the state. Democrats argue the original or “wet” signature requirement is unconstitutional because it makes it more difficult for voters to gain access to the polls, particularly after upwards of 2,400 voter registration applications were rejected in 2018, due to the current rule.

“This unconstitutional ban does not make an ounce of sense, and it is the kind of arbitrary voter suppression that we’re working to tear down right now before even more harm is done to our Democracy,” said DCCC Chairwoman Cheri Bustos in a statement announcing the lawsuit.

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Fox 51: National Democrats jump into new lawsuit over Texas voter registration requirements

<https://www.easttexasmatters.com/news/top-stories/national-democrats-jump-into-new-lawsuit-over-texas-voter-registration-requirements/>

Posted 1/12/20

BY ALEXA URA

In a sign of the state’s flirtation with battleground status, Texas is being hit with a third voting rights lawsuit filed by national and Texas Democrats — this time targeting the state’s voter registration requirements.

In a federal lawsuit filed Monday in San Antonio, the Texas Democratic Party and the campaign arms for Democrats in the U.S. House and Senate allege that Texas is violating the U.S. Constitution and federal and state law by rejecting voter registration applications without an original signature.

The legal challenge springs from a 2018 electoral kerfuffle over the Texas secretary of state’s rejection of more than 2,400 registration applications filled out by voters using Vote.org, a website run by a California nonprofit. That online application asked Texans to provide personal information and a picture of their signature to auto-populate a paper voter registration form that was then mailed to county registrars.

Days before a registration deadline that year, the secretary of state’s office indicated that applications submitted through the website should be considered invalid because they included electronic signatures, not physical ones.

In the lawsuit, the Democrats argue the secretary of state’s signature requirements are unconstitutional and impose “an arbitrary requirement that limits access to the franchise.” While the state allows eligible Texans to submit registration applications in person, by mail or by fax, Texas law “makes no reference” to requiring an original signature, they argue in the legal challenge.

Citing violations of the First and 14th Amendments and the federal Civil Rights Act, the state and national Democrats want a federal judge to block the state from enforcing the original signature rule and keep county registrars from rejecting voter registration applications.

“This unconstitutional ban does not make an ounce of sense, and it is the kind of arbitrary voter suppression that we’re working to tear down right now before even more harm is done to our Democracy,” U.S. Rep. Cheri Bustos of Illinois, who chairs the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said in a statement.

A spokesman for the secretary of state’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the lawsuit. But in a 2018 statement on the issue, former Secretary of State Rolando Pablos pointed out that Texas doesn’t allow residents to register to vote online and warned against relying on “websites that misleadingly claim to assist voters in registering to vote online by simply submitting a digital signature.”

Texas’ Republican leadership has long shot down efforts to enact online voter registration in the state. As of October, Texas was one of 13 states that didn’t allow for online registration.

In suing the state, the Democrats pointed out that the secretary of state does allow for one kind of electronic signatures — those submitted on voter registration applications received through the Texas Department of Public Safety. That agency allows Texans obtaining or renewing a driver’s license in person to enter their signatures on electronic keypads, which then may be used to populate voter registration applications. (Texas has been wrapped up in separate litigation for more than a year over claims it is violating federal law by not allowing voters who deal with their driver’s licenses online to reregister to vote.)

Bolstered by Republicans’ narrowing margins of victory and polls showing that Texas might be at least slipping from the GOP, Democrats have signaled they see voting rights litigation — and the voters that might be helped through it — as part of their long-term strategy in the state.

The voter registration lawsuit marks the third legal challenge by Texas Democrats, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in recent months. The Democratic groups teamed up in October to challenge Texas’ move to effectively end the use of what were known as temporary or mobile early voting sites. A month later, they filed a lawsuit challenging a longstanding state statute that puts candidates who belong to the same political party as the governor at the top of general election ballots.

“This challenge and the series of others we’ve taken to end burdens in our voting process reflect our commitment to making sure Texans can make their voices heard,” U.S. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada, who chairs the Senate committee, said in a statement.

The Daily Caller: Democrats Are Forming A Circular Firing Squad

<https://dailycaller.com/2020/01/13/democrat-civil-war/>

Posted 1/13/20

BY DEREK HUNTER

On today’s podcast we get into the inner-squad fighting among Democrats over campaign money, as AOC refuses to share what she’s raised with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). Also, Nancy Pelosi dodges questions about Iran but is reportedly preparing to send the articles of impeachment to the Senate. Democrats still have no strategy for what comes next, but they’re getting some really bad advice. And Elizabeth Warren says the “fate of the planet” hinges on the 2020 election.

DCCC Chairwoman Rep. Cheri Bustos can’t bring herself to say whether or not Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is good for Democrats or not, which is telling. AOC is refusing to share her massive campaign cash reserves with the DCCC, as is custom, preferring to choose which candidates she supports, possibly over incumbent Democrats. We get into the implications of this potential circular firing squad.

Nancy Pelosi couldn’t bring herself to express support for anti-regime protesters in the streets of Iran, because if they succeed it would be a victory for President Trump. We have the hilarious audio. Also, the Speaker is

reportedly getting ready to send the articles of impeachment over to the Senate. It's more proof that Democrats did not think this thing through at all and have no strategy for moving forward. We discuss it.

Politicians always say whatever election is upcoming is the "most important election of our lifetimes." Elizabeth Warren is upping the game now, declaring the fate of the planet is at stake in 2020. We have the audio and get into why they do it.

The Daily Caller: Top House Democrat Dodges Repeatedly When Asked One Simple Question About Ocasio-Cortez

<https://dailycaller.com/2020/01/12/dccc-cheri-bustos-ocasio-cortez/>

Posted 1/12/20

A top House Democrat repeatedly declined to say Sunday morning whether Democratic New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is good for the Democratic caucus.

A news anchor asked Illinois Rep. Cheri Bustos, who chairs the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), four times on CNN whether Ocasio-Cortez was "good for the Democratic caucus." She declined to give a "yes" or "no" answer each time.

Ocasio-Cortez is currently feuding with the DCCC over her refusal to pay \$250,000 in fundraising dues to the committee, which aims to help Democrats in House races across the country.

The division between Ocasio-Cortez and Democratic leadership was evident in Bustos's interview Sunday morning. "Is she good for the Democratic caucus in the House?" CNN host Victor Blackwell asked Bustos, who proceeded to dodge the question.

"She has a lot of followers. I have respect for her," Bustos said.

"She brings a new voice to Congress," she said, before Blackwell repeated the question. Once again, Bustos did not give a straight answer.

"Look, we've got members from all different spectrums. I respect her and she brings a new voice, and I think that's always welcome," Bustos said.

"It's interesting, I have the chairwoman of the DCCC whose job it is to support incumbents and Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez is one. I'm asking you just a straightforward question: Is she good for the Democratic caucus in the House?" Blackwell asked again.

"Look, she brings a voice. We have members from all different spectrums of the Democratic Party," Bustos said.

"Look, I come from a district that [President] Donald Trump won. My politics are somewhat different than hers, but she brings a voice that's welcome," she added. "And I have great appreciation for that."

Blackwell said: "She raised more money in the third quarter of 2019 than any other Democrat in the House, including the speaker of the House. She has given, as she counts, \$300,000 to other incumbents, including some in swing districts, and I'm asking the chairwoman of the DCCC if this member, who is right now in the top 10 of House members raising money, if she's good for the caucus."

"You can't give me a straight 'yes' or 'no'?" Blackwell pressed.

“Look, I have respect for all 235 of the Democrats in our caucus. She is bringing a new voice,” Bustos said, adding:

“The fact that she has raised unbelievable amounts of money and the fact that she just announced that she’s willing to help our candidates who need — who could benefit with that financial help — that’s welcome. And, look, you’re asking a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question. I’m a former reporter, Victor, so I understand what you’re trying to get at.”

“Yes, I’m trying to get to a simple answer,” Blackwell said.

“I have respect for her, I welcome her into our delegation and I’m very happy that she’s willing to help our candidates,” Bustos said, concluding the interview without giving a straight answer to the question.

IL-17 News

Chicago Tribune: Seeking to give residents a break on property tax, legislative task force recommends expanding sales tax. Gov. J.B. Pritzker, who’s pushing a graduated income tax, says there’s got to be another way.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/politics/ct-illinois-property-tax-task-force-20200111-pwblidyzyt5afpjd3catlklmwu-story.html>

Posted 1/10/20

BY JAMIE MUNKS & DAN PETRELLA

Gov. J.B. Pritzker, focused on winning over voters on a new graduated-rate income tax, is dismissing a proposal floated by a property tax relief task force that would expand the Illinois sales tax base to help fund public schools.

“That’s not something that I am supportive of; I think there are other ways for us to go about it,” Pritzker said of the idea, which was included in a draft report from the 88-member panel. “But I think it’s worthy of people bringing up all of the ideas because look — there are a lot of things we ought to consider and it’s not just one thing that’s going to solve the property tax challenge that we’ve got in the state.”

The final report from the legislative panel was due Dec. 31, and both the missed deadline and the contents of the 36-page draft — shared with multiple news outlets this week — set off partisan squabbling. The difficulty in reaching a consensus on recommendations, even among Democrats, indicates that the historically thorny issue of substantial property tax relief could once again vex lawmakers this spring.

Expanding the reach of the sales tax while reducing the tax rate was a proposal backed by two task force subcommittees, signaling significant support from some of Pritzker’s fellow Democrats. Additional revenues could be used to boost state funding for schools and to stock a new property tax relief fund, said Rep. Sam Yingling, the Grayslake Democrat who is chairing the massive task force.

“I don’t think we can have a realistic conversation about property tax relief without addressing the need to diversify the education funding revenue stream,” Yingling said. “It’s just not possible.”

An attempt to expand the sales tax would come as Pritzker asks voters in November to change the state’s constitution to impose a graduated-rate income tax to replace the state’s current flat tax, to generate an estimated \$3.6 billion.

Republicans have repeatedly attacked Democrats over pushing tax increases rather than cuts, and a sales tax expansion push coupled with the income tax overhaul could play into that Republican narrative during a legislative election year

Broad property tax relief has proved a difficult issue to address in Illinois spanning decades of leadership in the state. But some Democratic lawmakers have been hesitant to fully back Pritzker's graduated income tax plan without a direct tie to property tax relief.

Last spring, lawmakers considered a proposal that would have frozen property tax rates if voters approved the graduated income tax, and if the state took on a larger share of funding education. But that proposal didn't advance out of the House, and the massive task force was created instead.

Pritzker has promised to deliver tax relief to property owners and points to several pieces of legislation he's signed since taking office as steps toward that goal. Those include a consolidation of downstate and suburban police and firefighter pension funds, increased school funding from the state, and his \$45 billion "Rebuild Illinois" construction program.

"Those all work to alleviate local property tax need," Pritzker said.

The idea of expanding the sales tax to include some services, such as haircuts, dry-cleaning, and accounting and legal work, has long been discussed and discarded.

Sen. Don DeWitte, a St. Charles Republican and a member of the task force, said new state revenue from legal adult-use cannabis and a recommitment of 100% of Illinois Lottery revenues to schools are other potential streams to increase the state's share of education funding.

If the task force's final recommendations include the sales tax expansion, that would touch off "a very long conversation and discussion," DeWitte said.

"That one is going to require very careful analysis and construction," DeWitte said. "The first thing people will think is that it's an increase in taxes, unless we find a way to show it's a shift and not an increase."

That was the reaction of some top House Republicans, who denounced the draft report and said Democrats rejected their ideas that included limiting the so-called unfunded mandates on schools and local governments.

"For a state that is so in need of property tax reform, the Democrats have instead proposed tax increases," House Republican Leader Jim Durkin said at a news conference this week. "Heaven help the middle class."

House Republican Leader Jim Durkin speaks before a vote at the Illinois Capitol in Springfield in May. The Civic Federation, a nonpartisan budget watchdog, has advocated for an expansion of the sales tax to some services as part of a broad fiscal overhaul that also would include limiting state spending and taxing retirement income.

Lawmakers' "priority should be a comprehensive plan for what we're doing to fund our government," Civic Federation President Laurence Msall said.

"Merely expanding the sales tax base and then saying that the new services will go to relieve property taxes is not likely to have an impact unless there is a comprehensive plan for whether that amount of revenue will be sufficient for putting a freeze on school district property taxes or whether there's going to be some greater revenue sharing by the state," Msall said.

Lawmakers have tried to overhaul the state's property tax system through nearly a dozen task forces, special commissions and blue-ribbon panels since the 1970s.

In the mid-1990s, Republican Gov. Jim Edgar championed a plan to raise state income taxes by more than \$1 billion, with a corresponding reduction in local property taxes and an infusion of new funding for schools. But the plan ran into staunch opposition from Edgar's fellow Republicans in the Senate.

The latest draft report raises the prospects of such a tax swap, with one subcommittee calling for "the removal of school districts from the property tax system so that the state of Illinois has sole funding responsibility for K-12 schools."

But a key Democratic lawmaker who was a member of the task force said the idea is "astronomically untenable."

Rep. Mike Zalewski, a Riverside Democrat who chairs the House Revenue Committee, said the shift would require billions of dollars in new funding beyond the nearly \$9 billion in general revenue the state is spending this year. Local school districts together spent nearly \$20 billion during the 2017-18 school year, according to the most recent figures from the Illinois State Board of Education.

"Within the confines of the current budget and the current way we fund things, it doesn't seem like it's in the immediate future," Zalewski said.

The last major change the General Assembly approved was a 1991 law that capped increases in property tax collections in the collar counties at 5% or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. The law was extended to Cook County three years later, and other counties were later allowed to adopt the caps by ballot referendum.

The draft report contemplates a number of changes to the tax caps, including eliminating them altogether and leaving it up to local governments to decide how much revenue is needed to fund operations.

Yingling said he remains optimistic the General Assembly will act on a number of the recommendations the task force is putting forth.

"I think we're at a very unique nexus at this point in time where the legislature understands and has the willpower to do something about the property tax crisis," Yingling said. "There is a definitive recognition that something has to be done and it has to be done now."

Quad-City Times: Illinois agency, volunteers join to fight human trafficking

https://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/illinois/illinois-agency-volunteers-join-to-fight-human-trafficking/article_49a037e6-e46a-5d16-a3f0-f64adf853412.html

Posted 1/11/20

Illinois' child welfare agency is joining with other groups to fight human trafficking in Chicago and across the state.

The Department of Children and Family Services said advocates and volunteers on Saturday night will distribute toiletries along with information about human trafficking referral services, shelter care programs and substance abuse services. The groups will visit various stops along the Chicago Transit Authority's red line.

DCFS investigated 255 allegations of human trafficking during the last fiscal year, with 119 of the cases in Cook County. Experts believe the actual number of incidents is much higher because victims often don't seek help, either because of fear or distrust of law enforcement.

"It's important for everyone to understand that human trafficking is not something that only happens in other countries," said Marc Smith, acting director of DCFS. "It is alarming that children are trafficked in big cities and small towns across the United States and in Illinois every day."

Galesburg Register Mail: Illinois economy grew slowly in 3rd quarter 2019

<https://www.galesburg.com/news/20200110/illinois-economy-grew-slowly-in-3rd-quarter-2019>

Posted 1/10/20

BY PETER HANCOCK

The Illinois economy grew at a slower pace than most neighboring states and the nation as a whole during the third quarter of 2019, according to new figures released Friday.

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, which tracks state-by-state economic trends, said overall, the state's economy grew at a modest annualized rate of 1.4%, well below the national rate of 2.1%.

Illinois ranked 41st in the nation for GDP growth during the quarter, according to the data. Texas showed the fastest-growing economy, at nearly 4%, while Delaware came in last with no measurable growth.

The bureau measures the gross domestic product, or GDP, for each state. That's the total value of goods produced and services provided during a given period.

The biggest area of growth during the third quarter came from the professional, scientific and technical services category, which accounted for nearly 9% of Illinois' GDP during the quarter. That sector grew at an annualized rate of 5.8%, which translates to nearly \$1 billion in economic activity compared to the previous quarter.

That sector was closely followed by nondurable goods manufacturing, which accounted for 6.3% of the Illinois economy during the quarter. That sector grew at a rate of 7.7%, or \$961 million.

That was not the case with the manufacturing of durable goods, which are generally products that do not wear out quickly and can be used over an extended period of time, such as household appliances, vehicles and furniture. That sector, which makes up about 6.3% of Illinois GDP, shrank by a little less than 1%.

The retail industry posted a good quarter, growing at an annual rate of 7.3%, or about \$750 million. Retail accounts for a little more than 5% of Illinois' GDP.

But the growth in those areas was offset by steep declines in the finance and insurance sector, which shrank by more than 6.5%. That sector makes up nearly 9% of the state's economy, so the decline there translated to more than \$1.1 billion in economic activity.

The utilities sector also saw a sharp decline — more than 15%. But that sector accounts for less than 2% of the state's GDP so the decline translated to only about \$518 million in economic output.

Those trends were fairly consistent with national averages, BEA said. Declines in the finance and insurance industries were reported in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, while leading contributors to the nation's GDP growth included nondurable goods manufacturing; retail trade; and professional, scientific and technical services.

Galesburg Register Mail: Ill. corn, soybean production drops by roughly 20%

<https://www.galesburg.com/news/20200110/ill-corn-soybean-production-drops-by-roughly-20>

Posted 1/10/20

BY BEN ORNER

Production of Illinois' two most valuable crops fell by roughly one-fifth last year, according to final crop yield numbers released Friday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Corn and soybean growers saw production drop 18.6% and 20.4%, respectively, compared to 2018.

Farmers harvested just over 1.8 billion bushels of corn, down from more than 2.2 billion the year before. Soybean production decreased from around 667 million bushels to just over 532 million.

2019 was the worst year for corn since 2012, when farmers produced about 1.3 billion bushels. Soybean production had its worst year since 2013, which saw 461 million bushels.

Yield per acre was down 14% for corn at 180 bushels and 15% for soybeans at 54 bushels. That's the lowest for corn since 2015 and the lowest for soybeans since 2013.

Wetter-than-normal planting and growing conditions are to blame for last year's stunted production, said Mike Doherty, senior economist at the Illinois Farm Bureau in Bloomington.

"We had the latest-planted corn crop at least in my history of 30 years as an ag economist here" because of record-breaking spring rain, Doherty said. "I've never seen anything like it."

January through June was the wettest first six months on record in Illinois, according to the state climatologist's office.

In April, the month when farmers begin to plant corn and soybeans, less than a week was suitable for planting. Illinois then saw its third-wettest May and wettest June in state history, forcing many farmers to plant most of their crop in the summer.

"Just about every time these farmers were turning around, they were being hammered with the worst field conditions that they had seen," Doherty said.

Record spring rain and periods of untimely rain during the fall harvest season forced late harvests across the state. Only 93% of Illinois' corn crop was harvested by the end of November, according to USDA figures, the lowest total in a decade.

"It was probably one of the most stressful growing seasons that most farmers can probably remember," said state Rep. Dan Swanson, R-Alpha.

Swanson grows about 1,600 acres of corn and soybeans on his farm in western Illinois. He has yet to calculate his yields but predicts "considerably less than what we wanted or needed."

In 2018, 100% of Illinois' corn and soybeans were harvested by late November, according to the USDA. Swanson said he knows of some farmers in his district who still have crops yet to harvest.

Despite the difficult year, Illinois farmers were able to harvest 97% of corn acres planted and 99% of soybean acres. Illinois also continues to be a national leader in those two crops, producing the most soybeans of any state and the second-most corn, behind Iowa.

Nationally, soybean yields were down 20% from 2018. The top 16 soybean-producing states saw production drop between 8% in Kansas and 42% in South Dakota. Only Delaware, North Carolina and Pennsylvania saw increases.

Corn yields dropped only 5% nationally. A number of top-growing states, however, saw significantly lower totals, including Minnesota, Indiana and South Dakota.

The low yields reported across the country were not as bad as experts had predicted, Doherty said. He says government assistance like crop insurance programs and trade aid payments helped cushion the blow for farmers.

“Given the yield numbers we had in Illinois, we would have had particularly some counties where the entire county’s economy would have been a disaster,” he said.

List of certain Illinois crops and their 2019 yields, compared to 2018:

Corn: 1,846,000,000 bushels; 18.6% drop

Soybeans: 532,440,000 bushels; 20.4% drop

Hay: 1,140 tons; 12.91% drop

Wheat: 36,850 bushels; 0.3% drop

Oat: 650 bushels; 68.67% drop

Illinois numbers for other popular crops, such as sorghum and potatoes, were not included in the USDA’s report.

Peoria Journal Star: Pritzker puts criminal justice reforms atop 2020 agenda

<https://www.pjstar.com/news/20200110/pritzker-puts-criminal-justice-reforms-atop-2020-agenda>

Posted 1/10/20

BY JERRY NOWICKI

In year two, Gov. JB Pritzker will focus on ending cash bail, reforming low-level drug crime sentencing and reducing mandatory minimum sentences, he announced in Chicago Thursday.

Pritzker and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, both Democrats, laid out their plan at a news conference at Kennedy-King College. Stratton said real justice reform in Illinois will require more than just policing prisons.

“Justice reform is about striving to make equity and economic opportunity a reality for every community and every Illinoisan, because we simply cannot have justice without equity and opportunity,” Stratton said.

Stratton spearheads the Justice, Equity and Opportunity Initiative, established by a Pritzker executive order last February to study the subject. She submitted a report to the governor this month outlining goals of the Initiative.

Those include addressing social determinants of crime and incarceration; improving equitable deflection and diversion opportunities from the justice system; improving conditions and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in correctional facilities; and supporting positive re-entry outcomes to reduce recidivism.

The Thursday announcement comes as state's attorneys throughout Illinois are initiating the process of expunging thousands of low-level stand-alone marijuana offenses in compliance with the state's adult-use legalization law.

"Criminal justice reform is one of the major planks of our administration, something that we talked about for two years on the campaign trail and we've already made strides in our first year," Pritzker said. "Going forward, we have a lot to do with criminal justice reform."

He said top priorities include eliminating cash bail and reducing mandatory minimum sentences, "giving judges more discretion to take into account circumstances in each case."

"Those two things will have, I think, a significant impact on incarceration, on reducing incarceration in jails and in prison," he said. "We have a prison population of 40,000 in this state, we can reduce that and we can do it prudently."

Pritzker didn't give specifics on the mandatory minimum reforms or which minimums would be changed, but said "we're looking at all the mandatory minimums."

"It has to do with what kinds of crimes," he said. "The more violent the crime, obviously, the more reticent we are to look at anything like that, but that's all going to be examined by us and we're going to move forward with the mission of reducing our prison population."

Pritzker said "pieces" of the legislative effort will be introduced this session, which begins in late January and is scheduled to conclude in May.

Stratton said "it's going to take some time" to reform the criminal justice system, "but we do believe that over the next three years we can make some significant movement to getting us to the end point where we want to go."

She said in 2019, members of the Justice, Equity and Opportunity Initiative participated in listening sessions with more than 500 stakeholders representing community organizations, advocacy groups, law enforcement, state agencies and legislators.

Members of the initiative heard from several people that remained incarcerated for low-level crimes because they were unable to come up with bail, Stratton said.

In April last year, members of a House committee discussed the idea of ending cash bail, which is supported by Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx.

But law enforcement officials and other prosecutors at the hearing warned such a move could have far-reaching consequences, including putting victims of domestic violence at risk and taking away the ability of local courts to fund services for crime victims.

"In our county, we take in roughly about a half million dollars in bond a year, and that money fuels our criminal justice system," McDonough County Sheriff Nick Petitgout said at the April committee hearing. "Things like victims services, court appointed special advocates, teen court, diversion programs, the treasurer's office, the circuit clerk's office, the sheriff's office. There are many, many different parts of this system that rely on that money."

Rockford Register Star: Slick roads in Rockford area cause numerous traffic crashes

<https://www.rstar.com/news/20201111/slick-roads-in-rockford-area-cause-numerous-traffic-crashes>

Posted 1/11/20

BY KEN DECOSTER

Icy road conditions contributed to several traffic crashes in the Rockford area Saturday.

A car crashed into an unoccupied house at 504 King St. on the city's northwest side shortly before noon. No one was injured.

One person was hospitalized after a salt truck collided with a semitrailer Saturday morning at the intersection of East Rockton Road and Willowbrook Road in Roscoe.

Commonwealth Edison crews responded to power outages affecting more than 5,000 customers in northern Illinois as of early Saturday afternoon. Scattered outages are reported in Freeport and Stephenson County, too.

The Rockford region remains under a winter storm warning until 3 a.m. Sunday.

Up to 6 inches of snow is expected by Saturday night.

Trucks from Rockford's Public Works Department have been salting arterial and residential streets since early Saturday and a fresh crew will be mobilized Saturday afternoon, Public Works Director Kyle Saunders said.

"They'll be working through the night," Saunders said. "We anticipate snow to pick up late afternoon and early evening. If all things go according to the forecast right now, we're looking at mobilizing our residential contractors by 10 p.m. (Saturday). We hope to have our residential roads clean by 10 or 11 a.m. Sunday."

Rockford Register Star: Winnebago County budget woes leave cybersecurity, IT upgrades lacking

<https://www.rstar.com/news/20201111/winnebago-county-budget-woes-leave-cybersecurity-it-upgrades-lacking>

Posted 1/11/20

BY ISSAC GUERRO

Winnebago County has been struck 224 times since Nov. 28 by computer malware that could disrupt and even cripple public safety and other services provided to thousands of taxpayers and residents, but a potentially bigger threat looms: A budget crunch that has slowed the pace of upgrades to the county's network.

In 72 of those 224 instances, firewall technology employed by the county detected "callback activities," a signature of ransomware. The malicious software, typically spread through infected emails and websites, denies access to network systems or data until the victim pays a ransom to the hacker. Rockford Public Schools is still rebuilding its IT infrastructure following a September ransomware attack that left employees unable to access school computers, laptops, tablets and anything else connected to district servers or the internet.

In the U.S. last year, at least 113 municipal and state government agencies, 764 health care providers and 89 universities, colleges and school districts were struck by ransomware, costing an estimated \$7.5 billion in damage, according to a December report authored by the software firm Emsisoft.

Winnebago County has been fortunate so far. Employees in Gus Gentner's information technology department have quickly detected, intercepted and neutralized every virtual threat during the last month or so, including an attempted cyberattack that was thwarted at 3:37 a.m. Thursday.

“For us, 224 events in about a month, I’d say that’s normal,” said Gentner, the county’s chief information officer. “We have about 1,200 employees. With that many moving parts and that many people logging on to our network, there’s bound to be events. But it’s not a question of if there will be a cyber event, it’s a question of when.”

It’s also a budget question.

Baker Tilly, a private firm that the county pays for external auditing and financial consulting services, recently completed a review of the IT department and advised that \$10.2 million worth of hardware and software upgrades be completed within the next five years. Ideally, consultants said, the county should spend a bit more than \$2 million over the next three years on a “gigabit to desktop” network upgrade so that employees can continue to transmit data seamlessly with no disruption to county services.

Continued investment in cybersecurity is also paramount, Gentner said. Virtually all of the services that Winnebago County provides to its taxpayers and residents are dependent on the county’s IT network, which requires routine maintenance, repair and around-the-clock safeguarding, Gentner said.

“What we really need is faster interaction between our employees’ desktop computers and our servers,” he said. “We have about 1,200 employees. That’s a lot computers, a lot of data moving around all the time.

“It’s not just data in the form of text,” Gentner said. “There’s a lot of image data. A sheriff’s deputy may be rendering a mug shot that needs to be uploaded and stored on the server. Someone else may be rendering a video that’s evidence or an exhibit in a court case. Think about all of the video conferencing in our courtrooms when someone needs to testify from a remote location.”

Gentner said he submitted a budget request for the needed IT enhancements to administrators this fiscal year and during the two previous annual budget cycles. None of the upgrades he’s asked for has been funded, he said. On Thursday, the County Board rejected a \$133,000 budget amendment for data processing supplies and internet services. Without those network upgrades, deputies and corrections officers cannot effectively use \$2.4 million worth of Tasers, body cameras and squad car dash cameras that were recently purchased by the sheriff’s department.

County Board member Aaron Booker, R-1, voted in favor of the budget amendment, but the proposal failed to garner enough votes to pass. Booker said he predicts more budget battles until a majority of the board is willing to work with administrators to develop a comprehensive plan to pay for all of the county’s capital needs. Booker said that for now, at least, the board doesn’t seem to have the will to address the issue.

“I think it’s going to take a lawsuit or an election to change things,” Booker said. “That’s just my personal feeling.”

National News

The Hill: Pelosi set to send impeachment articles to the Senate next week

<https://thehill.com/homenews/house/477700-pelosi-set-to-send-impeachment-articles-to-the-senate-next-week>

Posted 1/10/20

BY CRISTINA MARCOS & OLIVA BEAVERS

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Friday that she expects to send the articles of impeachment against President Trump over to the Senate next week, breaking the standoff that had delayed the trial over his dealings with Ukraine.

The move, which came amid increasing pressure on the Speaker to drop her hold on the articles, means Democrats will move forward in appointing impeachment managers who will make their case that Trump committed high crimes and misdemeanors in Phase Two of the trial, which will weigh whether the president should be removed from office.

"I have asked Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler [D-N.Y.] to be prepared to bring to the Floor next week a resolution to appoint managers and transmit articles of impeachment to the Senate," Pelosi wrote in a letter to Democrats.

"I will be consulting with you at our Tuesday House Democratic Caucus meeting on how we proceed further," she added.

The Senate trial could begin as early as Wednesday, according to Pelosi's timeline.

The announcement comes more than three weeks after the House passed two articles of impeachment, largely along party lines, alleging that Trump abused his power while pressuring the Ukrainian government to investigate his political opponents and obstructed Congress in Democrats' inquiry.

Shortly after Trump became the third U.S. president in history to be impeached, Pelosi said she planned to withhold the impeachment articles until she was sure Trump would receive a fair trial, a condition she said included the ability for senators to call in witnesses.

But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) held firm in his stance that any decisions on witnesses should come after the Senate trial begins, in what he described as the same standard for former President Clinton's impeachment trial in 1999.

McConnell deflated much of Pelosi's leverage earlier this week when he announced that he had enough votes within his GOP conference to vote to begin the trial without acceding to Democrats' demands to commit to witness testimony first.

"A majority of this body has said definitively that we are not ceding our constitutional authority to the partisan designs of the Speaker. We will not let the House extend its precedent-breaking spree over here to our chamber," he said on the Senate floor on Thursday.

McConnell also on Thursday signed onto a resolution from Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) that would change Senate rules and allow GOP senators to dismiss articles of impeachment before the House sends them over.

"Leader McConnell's tactics are a clear indication of the fear that he and President Trump have regarding the facts of the President's violations for which he was impeached," Pelosi wrote in Friday's letter.

The Speaker also faced calls among Democrats for her to end the deadlock, particularly in the Senate, and pass the two articles to the upper chamber.

Several Senate Democrats, including vulnerable Sens. Joe Manchin (W.Va.) and Jon Tester (Mont.), said earlier this week that it was time for Pelosi to send over the articles.

One of Pelosi's home-state senators, Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), also said this week that "the longer it goes on, the less the urgency becomes."

And on Thursday morning, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-Wash.) said on CNN that he believed it is "time to send the impeachment articles to the Senate."

But in a sign of the power Pelosi wields over Democrats, Feinstein and Smith later reversed themselves and said that they deferred to the Speaker on how to proceed.

Still, just moments before the announcement, Pelosi dismissed reports of Democratic divisions over her impeachment strategy, characterizing them as false narratives manufactured by an obsessed media. She has, she said, "absolutely total cooperation" from within her caucus.

"It cracks me up to see on TV, 'Oh, pressure. Where's the pressure?'" she said. "I have news for them: You don't have a story."

And Pelosi did reap some new revelations while postponing the delivery of the articles, which she highlighted in her letter.

Former national security adviser John Bolton publicly announced Monday that he would be willing to testify if the GOP-controlled Senate subpoenaed him for testimony about what he witnessed.

His statement immediately sparked a renewed wave among Democrats — as well as some Republicans — saying they want to hear from the former senior official, particularly since Bolton is believed to have key insights on whether Trump withheld a White House meeting and nearly \$400 million in U.S. aid in order to pressure Kyiv to open politically motivated investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, among others.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) has also been calling for testimony from acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney; Robert Blair, an adviser to Mulvaney; and Michael Duffey, associate director of national security programs at the Office of Management and Budget.

Pelosi and Schumer have pointed to a report from Just Security last week showing emails between Duffey and the Pentagon discussing the direction from Trump to hold the military aid to Ukraine, with one official questioning the legality of the delay.

But McConnell remained unswayed by the pressure, as Democrats called for the new witnesses and revelations to be examined in the Senate.

The episode between the two political powerhouses has also further revealed that both the House and Senate leaders had waded into uncharted waters as it relates to impeachment under the Constitution, with both sides seeking to use the ambiguity of the law to their strategic advantage.

But the delay also foreshadowed what to expect in the coming weeks: Democrats attacking the Senate for holding an unfair trial, particularly McConnell for saying he would be in "total coordination" with the White House on every step.

Republicans allies of the president, meanwhile, will continue to blast the impeachment as a partisan sham designed to hurt Trump in an election year.

But some factors remain unclear as next week comes into focus.

Pelosi has not yet indicated which House lawmakers will serve as impeachment managers, who essentially act as prosecutors in a Senate trial.

But some of the names floated in recent weeks include top lawmakers involved in the impeachment inquiry, such as House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), and other members of their respective committees.

The expected timeline also means that a Senate impeachment trial is unlikely to conflict with the scheduled Democratic presidential debate on Tuesday night and force any candidates to remain in the Senate.

The five senators who are running for the Democratic presidential nomination — Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.) — will have to sideline any expected time on the campaign trail ahead of the Iowa caucuses on Feb. 3 once the impeachment trial begins.

The Senate will move swiftly to the trial once Pelosi sends over the articles. An impeachment trial will trigger a grueling Senate schedule, with the chamber in session six days a week starting at 1 p.m., excluding Sundays.

“In an impeachment trial, every Senator takes an oath to ‘do impartial justice according to the Constitution and laws.’ Every Senator now faces a choice: to be loyal to the President or the Constitution,” Pelosi wrote.

The Hill: Job numbers, stocks boost Trump in election year

<https://thehill.com/policy/finance/477785-job-numbers-stocks-boost-trump-in-election-year>

Posted 1/11/20

BY SYLVAN LANE

President Trump is heading into the final year of his first term with a strong job market that could boost his chances of winning another four years in office.

The U.S. added jobs at a steady clip in 2019, powering through the rising costs of Trump's trade battles, a global economic slump and myriad geopolitical crises.

Fears of a recession that dominated the summer have faded, and the stock market has shattered record highs through the first days of 2020 — with the Dow Jones rising above 29,000 for a time on Friday.

The December jobs report released the same day showed the U.S. gaining 145,000 jobs and maintaining an unemployment rate of 3.5 percent, the lowest in more than 50 years. And some economists say the labor market has plenty of room to expand in the new decade.

“The economy is pretty damn good for the vast majority of Americans,” said Claudia Sahm, director of macroeconomic policy at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, a D.C. think tank.

“This year was good news. We could have a lot more good news.”

The resilience of the economy bodes well for Trump, who will be the first president ever impeached to run for reelection. He’s already arguing that electing a Democrat could cause the economy to turn south.

“And just in case you didn’t know it, Ohio just had the best year economically in the history of your state,” Trump said Thursday during a rally in Toledo, even though the state lost jobs in 2019. “That’s not bad. That’s not bad. And this year is going to be even better. Maybe much better.”

Few economists see significant risks to the economy.

The Federal Reserve is forecasting a pause on rate cuts after slashing rates three times during an anxious mid-year stretch for global markets. And while the economy is expected to slow, few see a significant dip or recession on the horizon.

Still, there are weak spots beneath the headline numbers that could make Trump vulnerable.

Trump's promise to revive U.S. manufacturing and mining jobs was central to his appeal in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania — four industrial states that could make or break his reelection.

Hiring in those sectors surged in 2018 but fell flat last year amid the rising toll of Trump's tariffs and the retaliation they drew from China and Europe.

Manufacturing employment rose by just 46,000 workers in 2019 after rising by 264,000 in 2018.

Employment in transportation and warehousing rose 57,000 last year, just one quarter of 2018's gain of 216,000 jobs. And mining employment dropped 24,000 in 2019 after rising by 63,000 in 2018.

Economic downturns in Europe and Asia also cut into global demand for U.S. goods, driving a decline in hiring. The interest rate cuts issued by foreign central banks boosted the value of the U.S. dollar, making American goods less affordable in countries with limited buying power.

The mix of trade blowback and global sluggishness stunted Trump's mission to revive American production. U.S. manufacturing activity has been negative for every month since August and contracted in December to its lowest level since June 2009, according to the Institute for Supply Management's Purchasing Managers Index (PMI).

"2019 was one of the weakest years we've seen for manufacturing jobs over the last decade," said Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, a trade group representing manufacturers and the United Steelworkers.

Paul also cited a decline in U.S. auto sales as a drag on manufacturing overall, citing the industry's wide supply network and hefty demand for steel as Trump's tariffs push its prices higher.

"The pricing mechanisms that caused steel and aluminum to be in dire straits in the first place, weren't fundamentally altered by the tariffs," said Paul, who pointed to U.S. Steel's recent closure of a Detroit plant that resulted in 1,500 layoffs.

Closures at steel plants, auto factories and other manufacturing hubs across the Midwest are red flags as Trump attempts to reassemble his winning industrial coalition. Even so, Republicans in key states for Trump's success say the president will have little issue pitching his record.

"His tone and tenor has made it a little harder in some of those more traditional Republican areas. But, I mean, I've got everything from pastors to plumbers telling me, 'Okay, I maybe don't like the tone, but you've got to look at the results,'" said Rep. Bill Huizenga (R-Mich.).

Sahm said declines in manufacturing employment are closely connected to pockets of industrial states that have lagged behind the country. She also pointed to the paltry increase in wages as proof that the labor force has ample room to expand in 2020.

Wages grew just 2.9 percent between December 2018 and 2019 despite unemployment remaining at or below 4 percent. While economists once assumed joblessness at that level would spur massive inflation, Sahm said an influx of workers from the sidelines could help tighten a booming labor market.

"These are the kind of workers that employers just hadn't been willing to hire ... if an employer is willing to hire them, they're willing to work at a low wage," Sahm said.

"If employers can keep going and getting more people," she added, "we've got more hours to give. And that means we're not at full employment."

The Hill: Federal court upholds block keeping Air Force from discharging HIV-positive service members

<https://thehill.com/policy/defense/air-force/477809-federal-court-upholds-block-keeping-air-force-from-discharging-hiv>

Posted 1/10/20

BY TAL AXELROD

A federal appeals court Friday upheld a lower court's injunction blocking the Air Force from discharging two HIV-positive airmen.

"A ban on deployment may have been justified at a time when HIV treatment was less effective at managing the virus and reducing transmission risks," the three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals wrote in its ruling.

"But any understanding of HIV that could justify this ban is outmoded and at odds with current science," it added. "Such obsolete understandings cannot justify a ban, even under a deferential standard of review and even according appropriate deference to the military's professional judgments."

A lower court first filed a motion in February blocking the discharge of the two airmen from the military.

"I am extremely relieved to learn that I can continue to serve this country like any other service member," one of the two airmen said in a statement to CNN under the pseudonym "Victor Voe."

"Serving in the U.S. military has been the greatest honor of my life and I'm thrilled to see this court affirm the lower court ruling in our favor," he added. "No one should be discharged or discriminated against because of HIV when it does not interfere whatsoever with our capacity to serve."

The lawsuit was first filed by the two airmen in December 2018, accusing the Pentagon of discriminating against service members under a longstanding policy that stipulates that they cannot deploy outside of the country if they test positive for HIV.

The Trump administration put forth the new rule in February 2018 that states that those who cannot be deployed outside of the U.S. for a continuous year should be discharged.

The two airmen said they were at risk of being discharged despite recommendations from their superiors and physicians. They also said they were adhering to treatment plans and were asymptomatic.

Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek pushed back against two airmen's claims, telling CNN that "the Air Force does not find all airmen with asymptomatic HIV unfit" and that ill Air Force members' "fitness determination is conducted on a case by case basis."

The Hill: UN cuts humanitarian aid to Syria in win for Russia

<https://thehill.com/policy/international/477817-un-cuts-humanitarian-aid-to-syria-in-win-for-russia>

Posted 1/11/20

BY TAL AXELROD

The United Nations Security Council voted to adopt a resolution Friday that drastically cut the delivery of cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria in a diplomatic victory for Russia.

The resolution curtailed the number of crossing points for aid deliveries from four to two and cut the year-long mandate for cross-border deliveries to six months. The changes came after Russia, the top ally of Syrian dictator Bashar Assad, threatened to veto the resolution altogether before the midnight deadline to renew the aid deliveries.

Other permanent members of the Security Council had sought to add a fifth crossing point and extend the mandate for another year, but were forced to back down in the face of Russia's veto threat.

The resolution passed by a 11-0 margin, with the U.S., China and the U.K. all abstaining from the vote. The vote was the result of months of contentious negotiations over the U.N.'s mandate for cross-border aid deliveries to Syria.

U.S. Ambassador Kelly Craft blasted the resolution as "watered down" and a "body blow" to the Council's credibility, according to the U.N.'s news agency.

Germany's U.N. ambassador added that the decision had come "at a heavy price" for nearly 1.1 million Syrians in the northeastern part of the country who would "wake in the morning up not knowing if they would be able to get the medical aid they needed."

Russia's delegation to the Security Council has argued that cross-border aid to Syria was intended to be a temporary solution and that the situation has changed, maintaining that two other crossing points from Jordan and Iraq are no longer needed.

The U.N. estimates that it is supporting 4 million Syrians through cross-border aid deliveries and that 40 percent of all medical, surgical and health supplies to the northeast, including water and sanitation supplies, are delivered through the Al Yarubiyah crossing point in Iraq.

"Without the cross-border operation, we would see an immediate end of aid supporting millions of civilians," Mark Lowcock, under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said last year.

Roll Call: Freshman national security Democrats seize political moment

<http://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/freshman-national-security-democrats-seize-political-moment>

Posted 1/10/20

BY RACHEL OSWALD

In the hours after the targeted killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and with concern rapidly mounting about the potential for a direct military confrontation with Iran, several high-profile House liberals announced plans to constrain President Donald Trump's ability to wage war.

But it was a lesser-known and more moderate freshman — Rep. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, a former CIA analyst who did three tours in Iraq focusing on the country's Iranian-backed Shiite militias — whom Speaker Nancy Pelosi ultimately tapped as the face of Democrats' arguments for putting guardrails on Trump's Iran strategy.

The choice of Slotkin demonstrates the growing influence of a handful of freshman Democrats with experience in the military, Pentagon, State Department, CIA, National Security Council and the like. As House Democrats grow more emboldened in checking Trump — from war with Iran, to impeachment over the withholding of critical security assistance to Ukraine — they are increasingly relying on these freshmen to make their case.

They bring a credibility to national security issues that can be hard to challenge. They've carried rifles in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan; they've been on the bridge of ships of war underway at sea; they've been in the Situation Room during international crises.

This cohort first attracted serious national attention when seven members penned an op-ed in *The Washington Post* in September, arguing that withholding security funding from Ukraine while pressuring its president to launch an investigation into a political rival was an impeachable offense. Since then, their clout has only grown, even in an institution that prioritizes tenure and paying one's dues.

They have effectively seized on the current political moment, where national security seems to touch every aspect of Trump's agenda. Want to improve the economy? Enter a trade war with China, which the Pentagon identified as America's top military competitor. Want to alter the flow of immigrants into the country? Build a wall, using money from the Defense Department's budget.

But the op-ed, signed by Slotkin, Gil Cisneros of California, Jason Crow of Colorado, Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, Elaine Luria of Virginia, Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey and Abigail Spanberger of Virginia, stands out as a watershed moment of Trump's first term.

"We thought that a joint effort would send a very strong message, that this was something that went to the core of our national security and defense backgrounds, something that we all share and that has been the basis for our relationship and our time in Congress so far," said Crow, a former Army Ranger who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The op-ed's outsize influence — the day after it ran, Pelosi launched the House's impeachment inquiry — came as a surprise to the authors, Crow said. "I don't think any of us thought that it would have a large impact," he said.

Quickly gaining influence

Some of these freshmen met while campaigning, while others had worked together in security roles for years. Once elected, they quickly bonded over their shared experiences and started meeting for potlucks, drinks and the occasional morning jog. They began to communicate via a group text chain.

They have all assumed roles on key national security committees and their sharply focused questions, even coming at the end of long hearings because of their freshman status, have drawn notice for their policy specificity and general incisiveness.

Yet it was another group of first-term Democrats — Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna S. Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, known collectively as the "squad" — that drew national headlines, an enormous social media following and verbal attacks from Trump and his base.

As the squad and other liberals pressed Pelosi to open impeachment proceedings over the special counsel report into Russian interference in the 2016 election, the speaker demurred. And for their part, the national security freshmen were also skeptical.

"A lot of us had concluded that we had not moved forward in a way after the Mueller report that was compelling enough to bring to our district," said Sherrill, a former Navy helicopter pilot.

But that all changed with Ukraine.

“Immediately, a bright line had been crossed,” said Sherrill, who once worked in the Pentagon as a Russia nuclear policy officer.

Given that most of the authors had won by modest margins in red districts, their willingness to put their fledgling political careers at risk gave the op-ed even greater significance.

“If you can say one thing about our group, it’s that we are comfortable putting our skin in the game on any issue. We started doing that at a very young age when we raised our right hands and swore an oath to protect the country,” Crow said. “That’s not going to change now that we are members of Congress.”

Beyond those who signed the op-ed, freshmen with national security experience include Afghanistan veteran Max Rose of New York, former State Department assistant secretary Tom Malinowski of New Jersey and Andy Kim of New Jersey, whose résumé includes stints at Foggy Bottom, the Pentagon and the National Security Council.

These Democrats have pushed for a more thoughtful strategy for responding to Tehran after last fall’s Iranian attacks on major Saudi oil facilities. They have also criticized Trump’s “misguided and catastrophic” decision to order the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. troops from northern Syria, exposing Kurdish allies there to attacks by the Turkish army.

The Syria statement was written by Spanberger and Crow after a trip to Turkey, Afghanistan and the Syria-Jordan border with Houlahan, Kim and New York Republican Elise Stefanik.

“Literally, we sat in the airport and wrote that piece,” Spanberger said, adding that she and Crow were “texting back and forth with Houlahan” who had left the airport earlier, while looping in Stefanik to the statement edits.

Kim said he looks for common ground and consciously tries to avoid bomb-throwing in policymaking.

“I don’t want people in the Situation Room making decisions about war and sending our armed services men and women into harm’s way thinking about what’s going to be good for an election or what’s going to be good in party politics,” said Kim, who co-chairs the House Democratic Caucus National Security Task Force along with Crow and Xochitl Torres Small of New Mexico.

During a recent briefing on questions surrounding the administration’s decision to kill Soleimani, Crow said he had firsthand knowledge of the general’s bloody history.

“I know what it’s like to load wounded American soldiers into the back of trucks in Baghdad in the summer of 2003 that were wounded during IED attacks,” many that were orchestrated or resulted from training provided by Soleimani, Crow said. “But I also know that a shoot-first, ask-questions-later approach rarely turns out well.”

And their hands-on experience has, for the most part, been eagerly seized upon by their House colleagues, many of whom have spent their legislative careers focusing on Democrats’ traditional strengths in domestic policy areas like health care and the environment.

“When coming up in the military and being a Democrat, you kind of always feel a little bit like an outsider in the national security space,” said Houlahan, a former Air Force officer.

But with Trump’s 2016 election and his radical departure from U.S. foreign policy norms on issues such as human rights, alliances and opposing authoritarianism, Houlahan, Slotkin, Spanberger and other national security veterans felt a call to a new kind of public service.

"It's important that people understand that national security voices come from all different parts of the political spectrum," Houlahan said. "None of us owns patriotism, owns the flag."

Front and center

All of this no doubt informed Pelosi's decision to choose Slotkin to offer the war powers resolution ordering an end to unauthorized hostilities with Iran. The House debated and adopted the resolution on Thursday.

"For me, this is not a theoretical exercise," said Slotkin, whose son-in-law's military unit was stationed at Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq when it came under Iranian ballistic missile attack this week. "I have followed Iran's destabilizing activity in Iraq up close for my entire professional career. I have watched friends and colleagues hurt or killed by Iranian rockets, mortars and explosive devices."

Having Slotkin lead the effort sent "a powerful message that this is something that is based on national security priorities," said Spanberger, a former undercover CIA officer. "There is no room to make this a partisan thing with Elissa. Her motivation is to protect U.S. forces, her motivation is to protect the U.S. homeland because that's what she's always been doing."

But even as they amass influence, this group of Democrats isn't always in lockstep, even on matters of war.

Rose, for one, opposed the Slotkin measure, arguing that it was merely a nonbinding political statement that "sends the message that war is imminent." Luria also voted against it, saying she would prefer to debate an actual authorization for use of military force.

Still, Rose joined with Crow, Slotkin and over 30 other House Democrats on a letter to Trump demanding more information on the Iran strategy.

"As you send our nation's sons and daughters far from home to secure our embassies and interests in the region, it is only right that you provide the American people with a detailed explanation of your strategy and goals," they wrote.

Politico: Grassley pins blame for USMCA holdup on impeachment

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/10/chuck-grassley-usmca-trump-impeachment-097303>

Posted 1/10/20

BY SABRINA RODRIGUEZ

Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley on Friday blamed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for holding up passage of the new North American trade pact after she held off sending the articles of impeachment to the Senate.

"After House Democrats delayed passing the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement for nearly a year, the speaker's indecision on impeachment will now keep the trade deal from being ratified for even longer," Grassley said in a statement.

Pelosi announced Friday that she will send the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump to the Senate next week. Pelosi had not sent the articles to the Senate in an effort to secure certain guarantees from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Trump's impeachment trial. Ultimately, McConnell did not agree to any conditions.

The Senate trial could begin almost immediately after McConnell receives the articles, which would keep the USMCA from being ratified until after the trial is over.

Pelosi's office pushed back on Grassley's criticism, noting that the Senate has had ample time to pass the deal since the House passed it on Dec. 19.

"The GOP Senate will have had almost a full month to get its act together to pass USMCA," Henry Connelly, a Pelosi spokesperson, said in a statement. "After all their grandstanding, turns out Senate Republicans don't actually care enough to get the job done on time."

The House sent over the USMCA implementing bill to the Senate on Jan. 3. That has given the Senate exactly a week to formally consider the agreement this year.

A spokesperson for Pelosi told POLITICO that on Dec. 20, a day after passing USMCA, the Senate clerk informed House clerks that it would not accept the USMCA implementing language.

"Later that day, Senator McConnell's office said they could not receive the papers until Jan. 3," the spokesperson said.

McConnell's office could not be immediately reached for comment.

The Senate has also been prevented from holding an immediate vote on the pact after its parliamentarian ruled that the pact had to be signed off by six additional committees with jurisdiction over the agreement.

Grassley's committee already approved the deal in a 25-3 vote. At least five of the six remaining committees are expected to vote on the pact next week.

If all six committees hold markups next week, the pact still could be voted on before the impeachment trial begins. The trade deal is expected to pass with strong bipartisan support.

From: TexDems - Data Team [data@txdemocrats.org]
Sent: 10/22/2018 9:36:36 AM
To: Hilary Borris [borris@dccc.org]
Subject: Sent this VAN Update Friday, why not open it? :(

TEXAS DEMOCRATS

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From: TexDems - Data Team [data@txdemocrats.org]
Sent: 10/19/2018 9:39:06 AM
To: Hilary Borris [borris@dccc.org]
Subject: 10/19 VAN Email Update

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From: TexDems - Data Team [data@txdemocrats.org]
Sent: 10/22/2018 9:36:36 AM
To: Lena Bradtke-Litwack [Bradtke-Litwack@dccc.org]
Subject: Sent this VAN Update Friday, why not open it? :(

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From: TexDems - Data Team [data@txdemocrats.org]
Sent: 10/19/2018 9:39:01 AM
To: Lena Bradtke-Litwack [Bradtke-Litwack@dccc.org]
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From: Cliff Walker [cliff@txdemocrats.org]
Sent: 10/15/2018 3:05:20 PM
To: Lena Bradtke-Litwack [Bradtke-Litwack@dccc.org]
Subject: MyTexasVotes.com Update (2018-10-15)

TEXAS DEMOCRATS

Update: MYTEXASVOTES.COM

[MYTEXASVOTES.COM] Live now -- just added Election Day for vote center counties

Team--

Just want to make sure you saw Brittany's email on the latest updates to MyTexasVotes.com!

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Put these resources on your mail and ads:

MyTexasVotes.com

1-844-TX-VOTES

MyTexasVotes.com:

- **1-844-TX-VOTES -- LIVE monitored voter protection hotline number**
 - **Polling Place Locator (LIVE NOW!!)**
 - Will Election Day polling places -- vote center counties are live now; precinct-only counties will be uploaded this week.
 - Make a plan to vote tool, where voters will receive a text and email reminding them when they said they will vote
 - Ballot lookup
 - Application to Vote by Mail
 - Commit to vote
 - Voter ID Information
 - **MiTexasVota.com -- MyTexasVotes in Spanish**
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VAN Polling Places:

Early vote locations are already in VAN, E-Day polling places will be uploaded as they come in

Ready to get more Democrats voting? Click the link to tweet:

Make a plan to vote

- When you vote early, you get to choose the day & time that works for your schedule. Make a plan to vote: MyTexasVotes.com
- The blue wave is here. Make YOUR plan to vote: MyTexasVotes.com
- We can't let Trump Republicans rip families apart. Make YOUR plan to vote: MyTexasVotes.com
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Take action

- Blockwalk: txdem.co/canvass
- Mobilize: txdem.co/events
- Text: txdem.co/textbank
- Make your plan to vote: MyTexasVotes.com
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Vote by mail

- Request a vote-by-mail ballot today. Learn more: MyTexasVotes.com
- Do you know someone who was displaced from their home county due to Hurricane Harvey? Share this so they can apply to vote by mail: MyTexasVotes.com
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Find GOTV English & Spanish graphics here:

<https://txdem.co/GOTVGraphics>

Graphics like:

Did your vote by mail ballot get delivered?
It's easy to fill out:

1.  **Vote**
straight Democrat.
2.  **Sign**
the ballot envelope.
3.  **Mail**
in your ballot.

Visit MyTexasVotes.com to apply to vote by mail.

Keep up the fight!
-CW

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From: Christa Chiao [Chiao@dccc.org]
Sent: 11/7/2018 12:42:02 AM
To: South Region [southregion@dccc.org]
Subject: FW: Texans #FireStanStanart

From: Lauren Pully <lauren@txdemocrats.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 7, 2018 00:05
To: Christa Chiao <Chiao@dccc.org>
Subject: Fwd: Texans #FireStanStanart



Lauren Pully
Data & Analytics Director
lauren@txdemocrats.org
<https://calendly.com/lauren-tx>
(737) 241-9088

Begin forwarded message:

From: Press Texas Democratic Party <press@txdemocrats.org>
Subject: Texans #FireStanStanart
Date: November 6, 2018 at 10:40:35 PM CST
To: tdp-press@googlegroups.com

For Immediate Release

November 6, 2018

Contact: Tariq Thowfeek, (832) 247-4507, press@txdemocrats.org

Texans #FireStanStanart

Austin, TX-- Harris County voters have finally fired Republican Stan Stanart and overwhelmingly elected Texas Democrat Diane Trautman for Harris County Clerk.

Former State Representative and Texas Democratic Party Legislative Director Glen Maxey issued the following statement:

“After terrorizing voters for the past decade with long lines, polling location changes, delayed reporting of results, sheer ineptitude, and consistently obstructing every piece of pro-voter legislation at the Texas Capitol, Harris County voters have fired Stan Stanart.

“The election of Texas Democrat Diane Trautman will usher in a new era of pro-voter service in the nation’s third largest county. Diane’s election brings us a giant leap closer to new investments and opportunities that make voting more convenient and secure for Texans.

“I invite everyone to join me on Twitter at the #FireStanStanart hashtag and witness political junkies rejoice. Stan has in fact been fired.”

###

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You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "TDP Press" group. To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to tdp-press+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com.

Visit this group at <https://groups.google.com/group/tdp-press>.

To view this discussion on the web visit <https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/tdp-press/CACZqJHFW9fj7X7pVTdKF7w-ZwhwxwJXoR71T9XexA6S48HMKtg%40mail.gmail.com>.

For more options, visit <https://groups.google.com/d/optout>.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 9/20/2018 8:17:52 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Houston Chronicle: Voter turnout in Texas is dead last in America, study finds

Voter turnout in Texas is dead last in America, study finds

Fernando Ramirez // Houston Chronicle

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/texas/article/Voter-turnout-in-Texas-is-dead-last-in-America-13241845.php>

Only about one in three Texans line up at the polls during midterm elections, a new study on voter turnout in America finds.

In a Washington Post story examining how easy it is to vote in America, Texas came in dead last for voting in midterms.

The Lone Star State tied only with Washington D.C., a non-state where residents have no representation in the U.S Senate and House.

It's worth repeating: During election cycles where Congressional seats are up for grabs, Texans tied in voter turnout with a federal district that has no members of Congress.

To calculate findings, researchers analyzed voter turnout for the 2006, 2010 and 2014 midterm elections. In the last midterm election in 2014, only 28.3 percent of Texas voters went to the polls.

LATEST: Hoping for a blue wave, Texas Democrats instead got smacked this week

According to the Texas Tribune, the low voter turnout can be explained by Texas' large young population, a demographic that votes less frequently than their older, whiter peers.

That said, the competitive political climate around the nation may change some of those depressing figures in the upcoming midterm elections. For example, Texas broke early voting records earlier this year due to a surge in Democrat participation.

Sent: 9/24/2019 12:38:34 PM
Subject: TX10: In rural Texas, black students' fight for voting access conjures a painful past

From: Dennis Raj <Raj@dccc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2019 1:04 PM
To: Cycle of Engagement <COE@dccc.org>
Subject: In rural Texas, black students' fight for voting access conjures a painful past

In rural Texas, black students' fight for voting access conjures a painful past

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/in-rural-texas-black-students-fight-for-voting-access-conjures-a-painful-past/2019/09/24/fa18e880-ca69-11e9-a1fe-ca46e8d573c0_story.html

By Amy Gardner

PRAIRIE VIEW, Tex. — First came the poll taxes and whites-only primaries that targeted African Americans in this southeastern Texas community.

In recent decades, students at the historically black Prairie View A&M University were required to complete a “residency questionnaire” to prove their eligibility to vote. They saw their power at the ballot box diluted when their campus was carved into separate districts. Some were arrested when they tried to cast ballots, accused of improper voting.

Then came the 2018 midterm elections, when county leaders scheduled fewer early-voting hours on the university campus than in whiter communities nearby.

“Here we go again,” Jayla Allen, a third-generation Prairie View student, thought angrily at the time. She and other students sued, determined to fight what they viewed as racial injustice just as others had done in the past, she said.

Freighted with centuries' worth of mistreatment of African Americans, the debate over Waller County's election practices has emerged as a battle about more than just voting hours. The relatively narrow dispute tapped into deep feelings of marginalization and anger over long-standing efforts to keep black voters from the polls.

The intensity of the reaction in Prairie View echoes discussions across the country about racial inequality, which are prompting new examinations of past injustice to understand the present.

“You look at the history, and it inspires you and it draws you to action,” said Allen, a 20-year-old political science major. “I hate the fact that it’s been consistent since the ’70s, and here we are in 2019 fighting the same fight.”

What feels like prejudice to the A&M students is viewed very differently by Carbett “Trey” J. Duhon III, the local judge who helped determine the voting hours last fall.

Duhon, who is white, said there is no question that discrimination has fueled past election practices in Waller County. But last year, he said, the early-voting schedule was driven solely by limited resources and the need to serve a sprawling county. And in the next election, he said, he is aiming to provide as much early voting in Prairie View as at the main county location.

“I understand how this looks,” said Duhon. “I can understand and appreciate the perception for someone who knows the history of Waller County. I just wish people would take the time to learn the facts and the truth today. This isn’t your grandfather’s or great-grandfather’s county, not even close.”

“It kills me to be painted with a brush that I had nothing to do with,” he added.

A county in transition

Once a center of slavery and cotton production, Waller County, population 51,000, is now a mix of rural prairie and Houston suburb. Proceeding west out of the sprawling city, the strip malls, subdivisions and towering interchanges quickly fade into mile after flat mile of pasture and cattle.

What is now Prairie View A&M University was founded in 1876 to help freed slaves enter the workforce, according to university administrator Frank Jackson, 68, who lives in Prairie View and has served as mayor and county commissioner.

Now, Prairie View is dominated by a campus of roughly 9,000 students, a flat expanse of low brick buildings and wide drives known for its engineering and nursing programs.

The university has long had to make do with less money than Texas A&M University in College Station, the flagship of the A&M system. The gap narrowed following protests and lobbying; today, the Prairie View campus boasts a sparkling new stadium, student center and housing.

Progress on race relations is still evolving here. In 2015, Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old African American woman, died in the Waller County jail after she was arrested in a contentious traffic stop on her way to a new job at her alma mater, Prairie View A&M University. Although Bland’s death was ruled a suicide, the rapid escalation of a minor traffic incident propelled the case into the national debate over law enforcement treatment of African Americans.

Long before that case, Waller County was known for one of the highest lynching rates in Texas. Starting in 1923, whites-only primaries virtually excluded blacks from voting.

Even after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the ratification six years later of the 26th Amendment, lowering the voting age to 18, Prairie View students faced barriers.

In the 1970s, a local election administrator demanded that students — but not other residents of Waller County — fill out a “residency questionnaire” that asked, among other queries, if they owned property or paid taxes in Waller.

The students sued, prompting a landmark ruling from the Supreme Court in 1979 affirming their right to vote at school.

In 1992, 14 Prairie View students were charged with improperly voting, including one accused of voting twice — though one of the ballots belonged to his father, who had the same name. Following national attention, all the charges were dropped.

“We know that Waller County has not been totally fair with these kids,” said Jackson, sitting in his campus office surrounded by a crowd of students who gather daily to discuss current events.

“We’ve been here 143 years now,” he said. “The disparity is so blatant.”

The fight over early voting

As the 2018 elections approached, the student government association and numerous political clubs organized rallies, voter registration drives and transportation to the polls.

Then students noticed Prairie View, home to about 5,800 of the county’s 33,000 registered voters, had fewer than half the days of early voting as three other neighboring cities. And those hours were split between a campus location and an off-campus community center.

All three of those other cities — Hempstead, Waller and Brookshire — have larger proportions of white residents than Prairie View, which the Census estimates to be approximately 80 percent black. Overall, Waller County is about 70 percent white.

The students appealed for more hours at a county board meeting. The commissioners voted no. A few hours later, the students regrouped around a table on campus to plot their next move.

“We felt as though we were continuously fighting the same fight,” Allen said.

Then lawyers from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund reached out to Allen and several other students: Did they want to be plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the county?










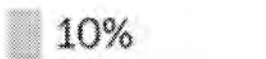





Two days after the students' suit was filed, the county agreed at a special meeting to expand early voting, opening a Sunday polling place at Prairie View City Hall and adding morning and evening hours on campus.

For Allen, it wasn't enough. Prairie View still had fewer early voting hours than other communities.

"They want us to fall down and break," she told the Rev. Al Sharpton on his MSNBC television show. "We are strong. We are standing firm."

Majority-black Prairie View had fewer early voting days

A college city in Waller County, Texas, offered fewer early voting days in 2018 than three nearby cities. Black students sued, but a judge who had called for more voting machines there said limited resources, not discrimination, are to blame.

CITY	CITY POPULATION PERCENT BLACK	EARLY VOTING DAYS IN 2018	MACHINES PER 1,000 REG. VOTERS
Prairie View	 80%	 5*	 2.3
Hempstead	 56%	 12	 1.5
Brookshire	 36%	 12	 1
Waller	 10%	 11	 0.4
Katy	 7%	 3	 0.9

*Include three days of on-campus voting and two days of off-campus voting.

Sources: Waller County, U.S. Census AMY GARDNER AND KEVIN UHRMACHER/THE WASHINGTON POST

Frustrated county officials had hoped the extended hours would lead to a resolution.

"Early voting had already begun," Duhon recalled. "We couldn't blow up the whole schedule. We were trying to work with the machines we had."

Turnout in Prairie View mirrored the trend across the country last year: It was dramatically higher than it had been four years earlier. In the city's two precincts, 2,647 voters cast ballots, nearly three times more than in 2014, according to county data.

Duhon remembers thinking that those numbers showed that voter access had not been impeded.

Leah Aden, a lawyer with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund who is helping litigate the case, said some voters have to work harder to surmount barriers to access — but that doesn't mean those barriers don't exist.

“Voting access is still not equal in the United States,” she said. “Some voters have to jump over the finish line. Others run to the finish line unencumbered.”

'Out of the dark ages'

Duhon said that with limited funds, the goal was to provide convenient access to as many voters as possible. That meant spreading hours and equipment among communities. The county, for instance, offered fewer early-voting hours in the comparably sized city of Katy, which is majority-white.

Duhon also said that long voting lines in Prairie View in 2016 had prompted him to double the number of machines in Prairie View during early voting last year — more than any other city in Waller County.

He disputed that the off-campus polling place in the city of Prairie View, a community center about a half-mile walk from campus, was inconvenient to students.

For Duhon, the allegation of racial bias was a personal affront.

The 49-year-old, who grew up in adjacent Fort Bend County, moved to Waller in 2005 to set up a private law practice. Elected in 2014 to lead the county's governing board, Duhon said he ran for office to “get Waller County out of the dark ages.”

One of his first acts was to reestablish early voting on Prairie View's campus in time for the 2016 elections, after years in which there was none.

Still, Duhon acknowledged that some in the county still view Prairie View students as a political threat.

“I think there's always been this fear that if all the students voted, and they voted in a certain way, they could take over the county,” he said.

Tommy Zorn, 67, a retired horse trainer sipping coffee in the Hempstead McDonald's on a recent morning, said voters should have to live in the county “a certain amount of time” before they can cast ballots. As he spoke, a woman on an white-and-tan spotted Appaloosa horse trotted up to the drive-through window and ordered a cup of coffee.

“I am the least prejudiced person in this county,” Zorn said, “but the only reason they throw such a fit is so they can vote together and keep this county black.”

An unresolved past

Allen doesn't think Waller's white leaders understand how painful and resonant the county's history of discrimination is for its African American residents.

Her family's own experience helps explain why the limited early-voting hours in Prairie View felt like so much more to Allen.

Her parents had studied at Prairie View in the 1980s, when the campus was carved into three separate districts for county board seats. Her sister had studied there in the early 2000s, when a prosecutor declared that students were not automatically eligible to vote locally and that doing so could be a crime.

The gerrymandered districts were thrown out following a federal investigation. The prosecutor's warning about improper voting also led to a victory for students, following investigations by the state attorney general and U.S. Justice Department. The prosecutor apologized for what he admitted was "threatening" behavior toward students trying to register.

"This has been happening since 1978," said Prairie View alumnus Brian Rowland, now 40, a onetime plaintiff in that case who now serves on the Prairie View City Council. "Part of it is about connecting the dots to the longer history. Prairie View students have always been challenged for their basic right to vote."

The fight over voting hours may become moot under a new Texas law requiring all satellite early-voting centers to remain open the same number of hours as main locations.

Duhon said he is in talks with city and university officials to offer as many early-voting hours on Prairie View's campus as at the Waller County Courthouse about six miles away.

In other words, some early-voting centers that Waller offered last year could go away. But if he has his way, Duhon said, Prairie View will not be among them.

Dennis Raj

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From: Cole Leiter [Leiter@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/5/2018 6:27:15 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-07: CNN: Panel discusses Dem Energy in TX

<http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=e685e457-3a17-4149-9635-7afd72c837b3>

Flags:

- Jonathan Martin calls out Moser as a "Bernie person" recycling old arguments against national Dems.
- Martin also points out that party bosses play in primaries all the time and that Moser's anti-establishment attack is tone deaf given TX-07 voted for Clinton.
- Martin also points out Rahm pissed off 2/3 of the party in 2006 and it didn't matter after we won the election.

Rush transcript:

but there are some dramatic signs even in ruby red Texas of what political pros call the enthusiasm gap. first to the point of the Democrats placing too much of a bet on Texas. these are the house districts in Texas. as you can see, it's overwhelmingly Republican. but early voting has ended, the primary voting is tomorrow. among the early voters, Republicans are about evenly split between men and women. Democrats think this is a great sign, not only in Texas but across the country. Democrats are counting on women across the country to pour out in this midterm election year. younger voters are also part of the Democratic coalition. 30% 30 and younger. look how big the slice of younger voters are. Democrats think it's a good sign in Texas. they think it's a great sign across the country, younger voters joining the coalition. what about a primary for the first time. 11% of the early vote on the Republican side were first time primary voters, people who perhaps voted in the general election before but never a primary. look how much bigger. 24% of the early voters never played in a primary before. they think that's intensity. that early voting advantage is just one example of voting in the Houston area, the Democratic family feud is a big issue.

[MOSER AD] we have to fix our broken politics, and that starts by rejecting the system or watching party bosses tell us who to choose. we tried that before and look where it got us. this time it's our turn. we have the power to choose who represents this district. i'm Laura Moezzer and i represent this message because you have the right to choose your politicians in Washington.

they see pieces of their coalition coming out in big numbers, but you also see, in a number of these contested primaries in Texas and around the country, the Democrats have some family feuds as well which Democrats say, that's great, we get some diversity. others say it's a little dicey.

certainly in the numbers you showed, there are some signs for Democrats and reasons to be optimistic. i do think it's worth noting that Democrats get excited about Texas a lot. it tends to be something where they see a lot of demographic trends that look favorable based on what we see for the party nationally and it never really comes to fruition. so i think it's worth being cautious at this point seeing how this plays out. it just is a difficult state for Democrats, even though the trends do seem to be lining up with what happens naturally, they don't seem to be able to crack through and put it to the finish line.

in a lot of ways this is a reflection of what we saw in 2010 heading to the Republican side. there was a fight between purity politics and electable candidates. we'll see what happens in the primary season if people can win a general election or if they resort to the ideologically pure candidates who may captivate the interests of these more liberal voters but may not do so well in general election.

it's energized by what they see as the radical party. certainly this was the same with President Trump and with Obama in 2010. there is a bit of the Texas obsession on the left. but here's why i think the Democrats have a right to be excited about that this year. not because of the statewide, i think that's still a rage, but there are a handful of seats in that state, namely Culver, Sonson and ~~petesessions~~, Dallas and Houston area, that are upscale suburban seats where Hillary and Trump broke even. they basically voted Hillary Clinton there. we tried that before and what happened, she is a Bernie person. the Washington bosses in primaries are crazy. have folks forgotten 2006? Rahm Emanuel pissed off half his party.

half?

okay, two-thirds. it created issues and it didn't matter. why? there was a bigger backlash that was bigger than Rahm and his primaries that was a reflection that led to a blue wave.

you did have excitement in 2010 of Republicans that were so i am impassioned by the Tea Party that spilled over. there were people that couldn't win.

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From: Rebecca Drago [drago@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/7/2018 5:54:25 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-All: Politico: Top takeaways from the Texas primary

From: POLITICO Pro Campaigns [mailto:politicoemail@politicopro.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 7, 2018 5:52 AM
To: Rebecca Drago <drago@dccc.org>
Subject: Top takeaways from the Texas primary

Top takeaways from the Texas primary

By Gabriel Debenedetti and Elena Schneider

03/07/2018 05:50 AM EDT

The 2018 midterms kicked off in eye-opening fashion in Texas Tuesday, as a series of surprises in Democratic House primaries jolted the landscape while the party's large turnout sent a warning to Republicans nationwide. But the GOP remained in the driver's seat in statewide races throughout Texas by night's end, leaving most of the shocks to down-ballot races.

Washington Democrats saw some of their runoff plans go down the drain. Well-funded candidates fell in contest after contest. George P. Bush unexpectedly cruised to victory. And women kept on winning.

With lawmakers across the country closely eyeing Tuesday's contests for hints of what's to come this year, those results and others provided a series of vivid lessons.

Here are POLITICO's six takeaways from the first primaries of 2018:

Democratic enthusiasm is real, but may not be enough in Texas

It's a familiar pattern by now: every few years, Democrats insist they're going to be competitive statewide in Texas because of their party's energy and demographic change sweeping the state. And every few years, they fall short. This year, though, the state's Democrats were certain the landscape would look different after more Democrats — 465,000 — than Republicans — 420,000 — voted in Texas' 15 largest counties in early voting.

It appeared to be a clear continuation of the boundless Democratic energy popping up all across the country in opposition to Donald Trump, but by the time Election Day numbers came in, the enthusiasm dimmed — slightly. Data from the state's other 239 counties favored Republicans, and by the end of the night, there were roughly a half-million more votes in the GOP primary than in the Democratic primary.

It was a clear improvement over the 2010 and 2014 midterm cycles, when Republicans made up roughly 70 percent of primary voters. And more Democrats voted in the senatorial and gubernatorial primaries than in any comparable race since 2002. But it likely suggested that much of the Democratic Party's early vote came from existing primary voters who were excited to participate this year, rather than any enormous tranche of newly activated voters.

That means competing statewide — including against Sen. Ted Cruz — remains an uphill challenge for Democrats. And Rep. Beto O'Rourke, the Democratic standard-bearer in that race, still must consolidate his party after two relatively unknown rivals picked up over 38 percent of the primary vote.

Still, their voters' newfound exuberance may be enough to swing individual down-ballot races both in Texas and around the country.

D.C. Dems get brushed back

Laura Moser isn't going anywhere — and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's first attempt at thinning a primary field failed.

The DCCC dumped opposition research against Moser, a journalist and activist, viewing her as a candidate with too much baggage to win in November. Instead, Moser will face off against Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, an attorney, in May for a shot at a suburban district that Democrats believe is key to flipping the House.

Moser, who raised more than \$130,000 after the DCCC's attacks late last month, is now laying the groundwork for an outsider, Bernie Sanders-style campaign. In a TV ad, Moser urges voters to reject "Washington party bosses [telling] us who to choose," adding, "we tried that before, and look where it got us."

"The DCCC's attack backfired, showing them to be a little toothless," said a Democratic strategist, granted anonymity to talk candidly about party strategy. "And once the DCCC inserted itself, it became inevitable that the same ghosts of Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, Bernie Sanders and 2016 will pop up."

The DCCC, in a memo released early Wednesday morning, said that voters "[picked] a clear frontrunner" and remain "in a strong position to win in November," DCCC spokesman Cole Leiter said in a statement.

Fletcher, who's backed by EMILY's List, has drawn opposition from unions. Working Families Party spent \$20,000 on negative ads against her in the primary, accusing her law firm of "[attacking] the right of immigrant women to stand up for themselves in the workplace," according to one digital ad.

Trump's popularity even helps a Bush — in Texas, no less

By avoiding a run-off in his reelection bid as Land Commissioner on Tuesday night, George P. Bush — son of Jeb, nephew of George W., grandson of George H.W. — showed Republicans that sometimes it pays to lean all the way into your ties to the president, no matter how close to the party establishment you may seem.

At least in conservative states like Texas.

A member of perhaps the state's most prominent modern political family, the 41-year-old Bush nonetheless relied heavily on his support from both Trump and Donald Trump Jr. to clear 50 percent in a race against a field that included former Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

Patterson had loudly criticized Bush for his first term in the job, including his work on preserving the Alamo, but a final-stretch ad blitz from Bush underscored the incumbent's conservatism as he hit Patterson for not backing Trump in 2016.

At a time Republicans around the country are trying to figure out how to position themselves with respect to Trump, Bush demonstrated that in a consistently Republican playing field like Texas, the combination of universal name identification and appeals to the Trump-loving base can be enough to overcome even harsh intra-party attacks.

Cash isn't necessarily king

Three Democrats — who led fundraising throughout much of 2017 — failed even to reach the runoffs in top-tier congressional races, despite their early money advantage. Now Democrats are left watching candidates who have demonstrated less fundraising prowess battle it out over the next two months for the nomination before being able to reload against GOP incumbents with a head start in the general election.

Ed Meier, a former State Department administration official, led his Democratic opponents in fundraising throughout 2017 and headed into the primary for a competitive, Dallas-area seat with the most cash on hand. But Meier, who aired TV ads in the expensive Dallas media market, finished in fourth place. Colin Allred, a former NFL football player, didn't air any TV ads and struggled to raise money, but was the top vote-getter.

"You have to do more than be the biggest fundraiser, because Democrats want to be inspired," said Isaac Baker, a Democratic media consultant who worked on Allred's campaign.

In the Houston-area battleground district, Alex Triantaphyllis raised more than \$1 million — topping all of his primary opponents in total raised during the race. But Triantaphyllis, a nonprofit executive, still finished behind three of them.

Jay Hulings, a former federal prosecutor who was running in Texas 23rd District, a traditional swing district, picked up early national support from Minority Whip Steny Hoyer and Blue Dog PAC. He posted strong fundraising numbers throughout last year, but he failed to make the top-two runoff.

The suburbs rule

Lawmakers and leading operatives on both sides of the aisle have grown increasingly convinced that suburban districts will be 2018's central battleground in the war for control of the House. And the matchups created by Tuesday's primary in two highly targeted races likely cement that expectation. Much of the party's turnout gains were focused in metro and suburban zones like these.

Outside of Dallas, Allred posted an unexpectedly large margin of victory in a crowded primary to set himself up as a clear favorite in May's runoff before taking on Republican Rep. Pete Sessions, in a district that went for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

And in suburban Houston, in another Clinton district, the vulnerable Rep. John Culberson will also have to wait until May to find out his opponent's identity. The vote totals — the number of votes in the GOP primary exceeded the Democratic primary tally by only 5,000 — reflect serious interest from Democrats in the district Culberson has represented for nine terms.

"This is proof positive of everything we've been taking about with these newly-competitive districts — growing in diversity, highly educated oftentimes," said Charlie Kelly, executive director of House Majority PAC, the main Democratic super PAC for House races. "Places that, I think, are now really competitive. We saw the transition in 2016, and we're seeing more evidence today."

The 'Year of the Woman' starts off strong

Texas is on track to get its first two Latina members of Congress, while also elevating women in some of the most hotly contested primaries in top-tier races throughout the state.

"The Democrats coming out of the Texas primaries tonight are women and people of color in greater numbers than we've seen in the past, and it reflects the diversity of the modern-day Democratic Party," Baker said.

The Democratic nominee facing Rep. Will Hurd for his battleground seat will likely be a woman: Obama administration alum Gina Ortiz Jones finished first in a Democratic primary on Tuesday night, while Judy Canales, another former Obama administration official, was battling a male candidate for second place Wednesday morning. In Houston, Moser and Fletcher are squaring off, before one of them turns to Culberson. In Dallas, Lillian Salerno will run against Allred.

All of EMILY's List-endorsed candidates in Democratic primaries either won outright or advanced to a runoff. The pro-abortion rights group president, Stephanie Schriock, called it a "historic night" in a statement.

Sylvia Garcia, a state senator, and Veronica Escobar, a former El Paso County judge, both clinched the nomination in their respective primaries — clearing their path to likely becoming the first Hispanic women to represent the state in Congress. Garcia drew a strong challenge from Tahir Javed, a health care executive who self-funded much of his bid, but her name ID in the district outstripped his endorsement from Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

Escobar won the primary in Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke's El Paso-based seat, and will be a prohibitive favorite in November in a majority-Hispanic district that backed Hillary Clinton by a 46-point margin.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/campaigns/article/2018/03/top-takeaways-from-the-texas-primary-443992>

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From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 2/21/2018 2:15:35 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Mother Jones: The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat

The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat

Tim Murphy // Mother Jones

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/02/the-2018-election-started-tuesday-with-one-jaw-dropping-stat/>

A surge in women candidates may be a big reason why.

The 2018 election officially began on Tuesday with the first day of early voting ahead of Texas' March 6th primaries. Evidently, a lot of people got the message. In Harris County, which includes Houston and is the state's largest population center, Republican turnout was 25-percent higher than the first day of early-voting in the 2014 primaries. That makes some sense—there's an expensive state house of representatives race in the county and an open Republican-leaning congressional district. But what's more surprising is the turnout jump on the Democratic side—a full 300 percent.

Robert Downen

@RobDownenChron

The 3,800 in-person votes cast by Democrats Tuesday represents a 300-percent increase as compared to the first day of early voting in 2014. In-person Republican votes were also up about 25 percent.

w/ @GabMoBanks <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Thousands-vote-in-Harris-County-as-nation-s-first-12628908.php> ...

10:58 PM - Feb 20, 2018

Thousands vote in Harris County as nation's first primary election kicks off

The 3,800 in-person votes cast by Democrats on Tuesday represents a 300-percent increase as compared to the first day of early voting in 2014, the last non-presidential-year primary, according to one...

Harris County was one of the few bright spots for Democrats in 2016, and that momentum has carried over into the current cycle. A big reason for that turnout boost: the extremely competitive Democratic primary in the state's seventh congressional district. The seventh, which extends from Houston to Katy, is an archetype of the kind of seat progressives are targeting with new fervor in 2018—affluent, suburban, highly-educated, and very diverse. And the field reflects the kind of candidates that are running for Democratic nominations in 2018—a cancer researcher worried about budget cuts and coverage gaps; a lawyer who has worked with reproductive rights groups; a freelance writer who launched an online tool to help users pressure members of Congress; and the director of a non-profit that works with refugees.

What's also notable is that two of those four leading candidates vying for a spot in the May runoff—Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, the lawyer, and Laura Moser, the writer-turned-activist—are women.

That might not be such a big deal in a lot of places, but it's highly unusual in Texas. There are just three women in the state's 36-member congressional delegation, and it's been that way for a while—other than Republican Rep. Shelley Sekula-Gibbs' two-month stint in 2006 (she filled out the remainder of ex-Rep. Tom Delay's term), Texas hasn't elected a new woman to Congress this millennium. Reps. Eddie Bernice Johnson and Sheila Jackson Lee were the second and third Democratic women ever to represent Texas in Congress when they were elected in the early 1990s. There hasn't been a fourth. There haven't been a lot of close calls either—eight of the nine male members of the state's Democratic delegation beat other Democratic men in their primaries.

That will almost certainly change this year. In the El Paso district currently represented by Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who is retiring from the House to run for Senate, Veronica Escobar and Dori Fenenbock are competing for the

nomination in what is a safely Democratic seat. And state Sen. Sylvia Garcia is the favorite in the primary to replace retiring Democratic Rep. Gene Green in Houston. Former Air Force intelligence officer Gina Ortiz Jones is vying to take on Republican Rep. Will Hurd in a West Texas swing district. Ortiz Jones has the backing of EMILY's List, which supports pro-choice Democratic women, and has the endorsement of the district's largest newspaper, the San Antonio Express-News, but she first needs to get past prosecutor Jay Hulings in the primary. And there is, of course, the seventh district, which is shaping up to be a top battleground in November.

The surge of women candidates reflects the nature of the Trump-inspired Resistance itself—the logical evolution of a movement that progressed from women's marches and private Facebook groups to Indivisible chapters and candidate trainings held by groups like EMILY's List and its Texas counterpart, Annie's List. Democrats have had waves before; but if they catch another one this fall, it will look a lot different than years past.

From: Cole Leiter [Leiter@dccc.org]
Sent: 2/19/2018 9:23:17 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-23: Rivard Report: Early Voting Starts Tuesday for Primary Elections

Early Voting Starts Tuesday for Primary Elections

By Jeffrey Sullivan

<https://therivardreport.com/early-voting-starts-tuesday-for-primary-elections/>

The 2018 election cycle for statewide offices and Congressional midterms kicks off Tuesday with the start of early voting for the March 6 primary election.

San Antonians have the opportunity this year to vote for representatives to the U.S. Senate, the 21st and 23rd congressional districts, several statewide positions including governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, district attorney, and commissioner seats among others.

Click [here](#) for early voting information, [here](#) for sample ballots, and [here](#) to check your registration status. The deadline to register to vote in the primaries was Feb. 5. Polls are open [every day of the week](#) during the 11-day early voting period.

Texas is an open-primary state, so voters choose at the polls which ballot they want to vote on: Democrat or Republican. However, in the case of a May 22 runoff in any of the races, voters must vote in the same party they chose in the primary. You don't have to vote in a primary to vote in the November general election, where voters can vote for either party. The last day to register for the Nov. 6 election is Tuesday, Oct. 9.

Chairs for the Bexar County Democratic and Republican parties are also on the ballots, but for now here's an overview of the main races:

Governor

Related: [Democratic Gubernatorial Rivals Unite in Blasting Abbott](#)

Nine Democrats are running to represent the party for the Texas Governor's race, including primary frontrunners former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez and Houston businessman Andrew White. Incumbent Governor Greg Abbott faces two

Republican primary opponents, but they are not expected to draw a significant amount of voters away from Abbott, who has more than \$43 million in the bank.

Lieutenant Governor

Incumbent Dan Patrick faces Scott Milder in the Republican primary. The lone challenger is a businessman and former Rockwall City Council member.

Mike Collier is one of two Democrats vying for the position. Collier, the former treasurer of the Texas Democratic Party, lists property tax and public education reform as his top issues. Michael Cooper, a retired auto dealer sales manager, is running to increase education in the state.

U.S. House District 21

Related: In Race to Replace U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith, 18 Republicans Look to Stand Out

There are 22 candidates currently in the race for Texas' 21st Congressional District, held by U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith (R-San Antonio) for the last 31 years. Smith announced his retirement in November, prompting 18 Republicans and four Democrats to seek the seat. Republican candidates include House Rep. Jason Isaac (R-Dripping Springs); Chip Roy, former chief of staff of U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas); and Bexar County Republican Party Chairman Robert Stovall.

U.S. House District 23

The primary for Texas' 23rd Congressional District, which includes much of the Texas border with Mexico, has incumbent U.S. Rep. Will Hurd (R-San Antonio) facing a lone Republican challenger and five Democratic hopefuls.

Hurd is a San Antonio native and a former undercover officer with the Central Intelligence Agency. Alma Arredondo-Lynch is a Uvalde-based dentist and rancher by trade and lists repealing Obamacare as her top issue.

Rick Treviño, who ran for San Antonio City Council District 6 in May 2017, is running against former Air Force intelligence officer Gina Ortiz Jones and former San Antonio federal prosecutor Jay Hulings in the Democratic primary.

U.S. Senator

Four Republicans are running against incumbent Senator Cruz to represent Texas, but the larger challenge appears to come from across the aisle. U.S. Rep Beto

O'Rourke (D-El Paso) is the "clear frontrunner" of three in the Democratic primary, according to the *Texas Tribune*. O'Rourke, who refuses to accept campaign funding from political action committees, has been raising more money than Cruz. The incumbent, however, maintains more cash on hand.

State Rep. District 122

Related: Abbott Endorses State Rep. Lyle Larson's Primary Challenger

Abbott recently weighed in on the race for Texas House District 122, endorsing Chris Fails, mayor of Hollywood Park, over incumbent Rep. Lyle Larson (R-San Antonio).

Larson, an outspoken critic of Abbott, chairs the House Natural Resources Committee and has served four terms.

The governor criticized Larson for not supporting efforts to reform property taxes. Larson told the *Rivard Report* he found that accusation "misinformed." Fails said he would support the governor's agenda, particularly noting his support for his plan to address property tax reform at the next legislative session.

State Rep. District 121

Related: Candidates for Joe Straus' District 121 Seat Talk Education, Transit, Guns

Seven candidates – six Republicans and one Democrat – are running to succeed House Speaker Joe Straus (R-121), who announced in October that he would not seek re-election.

Several of Republican candidates have been elected to public offices, including former San Antonio City Council member Carlton Soules (D10), or have run for the district seat before, such as Matt Beebe.

Land Commissioner

Related: Land Commissioner: 'Doctored' Alamo Management Audit Is Under Investigation

Four republican candidates are running in the primary for Commissioner of the General Land Office, including incumbent George P. Bush and former Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson. Two Democratic candidates are running to represent the party in the race.

Bush, as leader of the department, oversees the restoration of the Alamo. Patterson, who uses an image of the Alamo in his logo, is attempting to retake his

former position because he does not believe the \$300 million project is being handled properly

Miguel Suazo, a lawyer and one of the Democratic candidates, says Bush failed to protect the Alamo and properly assist recovery efforts in Houston after Hurricane Harvey. Tex Morgan, a computer engineer and democratic candidate, also believes recovery efforts have not been handled properly, and adds that there should be better transparency in the land commissioner's office.

Commissioner of Agriculture

Two Republicans are challenging incumbent Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Sid Miller, who said during a recent debate that he worked over his first term in the seat to restore order in the office, according to the *Texas Tribune*. Trey Blocker, a former lobbyist, said "I want to restore honesty, integrity and fiscal responsibility to the Department of Agriculture."

Bexar County District Attorney

Bexar County District Attorney Nico LaHood faces one Democratic primary opponent, Joe Gonzales. The two have a history of conflict as LaHood allegedly threatened to destroy Gonzales' law practice. The lawsuit that Gonzales filed ended in a mistrial. Tylden Shaeffer, local defense attorney and former Bexar County prosecutor, is the lone Republican candidate in the race.

Bexar County Commissioner (Pct. 2)

Related: In Race for County Seat, Debate Pits Old Against New

Bexar County Commissioner Paul Elizondo (Pct. 2) faces two Democratic challengers, Mario Bravo and Queta Rodriguez. Each is competing against Elizondo's 32 years of experience at the post, and neither have held public office before. Bravo wants to govern with community health in mind, and Rodriguez wants to strive for more economic developments in her precinct.

Ismael Garcia and Theresa Connolly are the two Republican candidates running in the primary for the position.

Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Calvert (Pct. 4) is up for re-election, but faces no challengers.

Voter Turnout

Bexar County had more than a million registered voters in 2016, but less than half of those voters cast a ballot in that election cycle, according to the Texas Secretary of State.

A 2018 Texas Civic Health Index found that political participation in the state "remains extremely low."

One reason for low participation is that voters "are too busy or couldn't vote because of the time commitments to work," said Susan Nold, director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life and a contributor to the report. She told the *Rivard Report* on Friday that "early voting in Texas is one way to address that problem of not having time to vote."

"However early voting is only useful if county election offices are making early voting opportunities accessible and known to voters," Nold said. "This varies by county."

There are 38 early voting locations across San Antonio and Bexar County. Voters can cast a ballot at any of them during the two week early voting period. However, on primary election day, March 6, voters in Bexar County must go to the polling location tied to the residential address on their voter registration. To find that location, click here.

Polls are open every day of the week during the 11-day early voting period.

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From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 5:08:19 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Washington Post: Texas may offer hints on 'Trump effect' in 2018 midterms

Texas may offer hints on 'Trump effect' in 2018 midterms

Will Weissert // AP

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/democrats-big-texas-turnout-may-not-translate-to-many-wins/2018/03/06/1b47ec62-20fd-11e8-946c-9420060cb7bd_story.html?utm_term=.36cbeac95451

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas Democrats turned out in force ahead of the first-in-the-nation primary Tuesday in what could be an early hint of a midterm election backlash against President Donald Trump, though their party remains a longshot to dent Republican political dominance of the state.

Democratic early voting across Texas' 15 most-populous counties more than doubled that of the last non-presidential cycle in 2014, while the number of Republican early ballots cast increased only slightly. Total Democratic early votes exceeded Republican ones roughly 465,000 to 420,000, though those figures combined accounted for less than 9 percent of the state's total registered voters.

"I would like to see a complete change in the top of the government," said Bonnie Kobilansky, a 64-year-old nurse practitioner who voted Tuesday in the Democratic primary. "We have to get Trump out of office. This is the most scary time of my life, and I've lived a long time."

Still, Democrats haven't won any of Texas' 29 statewide offices since 1994, the nation's longest losing streak. That's expected to continue this cycle despite any possible "Trump effect" because Democrats fielded little-known candidates against top Republicans, such as Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Even Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has been indicted on felony securities fraud charges, remains favored for re-election.

Laura Smith, 60, casting a Republican ballot in Dallas, said: "I love President Trump. Absolutely love him."

"He has guts. He's not afraid. He's strong. He's a leader," said Smith, who works in a dentist's office.

A record six Texas Republicans and two Democrats are leaving Congress, meaning the state will be losing clout on key House committees. But none of those open seats are expected to flip. They've drawn so many hopefuls from each party, that most primary races won't have anyone winning a majority of Tuesday's votes, meaning runoff elections May 22 will determine who will be on November's general election ballot.

Democrats have a better shot in November of unseating three Republican congressional incumbents — Rep. Pete Sessions in Dallas, Rep. John Culberson of Houston and Rep. Will Hurd in a district stretching hundreds of miles from San Antonio to El Paso. Hillary Clinton beat Trump in all three districts in 2016, but Democratic primary runoffs may be necessary in all three races.

Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a former punk rock guitarist, is one of the Democrats leaving his House seat and has launched a longshot bid to unseat Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. Neither O'Rourke nor Cruz has faced serious primary challengers, but the challenger has outtraised Cruz and the incumbent has warned conservatives against complacency, suggesting that liberals will "crawl over broken glass in November to vote," against Trump and the GOP.

The Democrats have had their own internal strife in Texas over congressional hopeful Laura Moser, who moved from Washington to her native Houston to try and unseat Culberson. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, fearing Moser may be too liberal to win the general election, blistered her for comments from a 2014 Washingtonian magazine article in which Moser said she'd "rather have her teeth pulled out" than live in rural Paris, Texas.

Moser kept things positive while campaigning in Houston on Tuesday, saying the strong Democratic turnout in early voting, "It's amazing. And unlike anything I remember."

But Republican political consultant Derek Ryan noted that only about 3 percent of those casting ballots early in the Democratic primary were first-time voters, meaning most Texans participating "were probably voting Democrat in general elections in previous cycles."

"Three percent, that could make a difference in some smaller races, but in a statewide election I don't think that's enough to sway anything," Ryan said. "Democrats are showing up in the primary election, does that mean more are going to show up in the general election?"

A close Republican primary race Tuesday could be for land commissioner, where George P. Bush was the first member of his family to win his first election four years ago but drew an unlikely challenger in Jerry Patterson, a former Bush supporter who preceded him as land commissioner. Bush has been backed by Trump, but a loss would mean that no one from his family's political dynasty would be in elected office.

Another key contest is the Democratic gubernatorial primary, where the top two contenders in a crowded field are former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez, backed by the party's establishment, and Andrew White, who opposes abortion and whose father, Mark, was governor in the 1980s. Neither White nor Valdez may win a majority of Tuesday's votes, though.

Abbott has an eye-popping \$43 million in campaign cash, tops among gubernatorial hopefuls nationwide, and isn't expected to be seriously challenged by any Democrat. Instead, he's focused on attempting to unseat members of his own party, endorsing the Republican primary challengers to three state House incumbents who backed past ethics reform measures that might have limited gubernatorial power. That includes state Rep. Sarah Davis, a suburban Houston Republican who supports abortion rights.

Davis counters that her district's residents "will not be told for whom to vote."

From: Javier Gamboa [Gamboa@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 4:14:12 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-ALL : What the Texas Primary Results Could Reveal About Immigration in 2018 Elections

What the Texas Primary Results Could Reveal About Immigration in 2018 Elections

<http://time.com/5188008/texas-primary-results-immigration/>

Joshua Keeler—Reuters

By **MAYA RHODAN**

4:25 PM EST

As polls close in the Texas primary election Tuesday night, Democrats and Republicans will be looking closely for evidence of the political fallout from the Trump Administration's approach to immigration.

Democrats haven't won a statewide election in the deep-red state since 1994 — the nation's longest losing streak — but they believe they could be helped this year by issues like Washington's inability to resolve the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, an Obama-era program that shields some 700,000 young immigrants from deportation.

By Tuesday night it will still be too soon to tell how things might play out this fall, but turnout, where voters are concentrated and who wins crowded primary fields will give some clues.

Democrats have their sights set on five congressional districts in the Lone Star state and at least three have been named contests to watch by national outlets. One, Texas's 23rd, is a swing district that's home to nearly one-third of the U.S. border with Mexico.

Republicans and Democrats are facing off against members of their own party on Tuesday and there is little intra-party difference when it comes to immigrants and border issues.

But Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University, says the issue has likely been a motivating factor for many voters, some of whom have already gone to the polls. Over 800,000 voters have voted either in-person or by mail this early voting period, about 300,000 more voters than in 2014, reports show. Democratic turnout surpassed that of Republicans in midterm early voting for the first time ever. Compared to four years ago, about 150% more Democrats voted early in 2018 and major boosts in turnout occurred in six counties with high Latino populations.

ADVERTISING

“I think some of that Democratic surge and turnout can be attributed to DACA and border issues more generally,” Jillson says. “But as we move toward the general election, that’s where we’ll see immigration and DACA in particular having a major impact because then the races will be between a Democrat who favors immigration reform and a Republican who is talking about building a wall.”

The 23rd congressional district in Texas is home to more than 800-miles of the border. According to state election records, there was high Democratic turnout in two counties that make up some of the, El Paso and Bexar counties. But regardless of who wins the Democratic primary on Tuesday, both candidates in that race will largely agree on the issue of an expansive border wall when it comes time for the general election.

In the district’s primary, Democratic candidates have painted the proposed wall and Donald Trump as their enemy. One candidate used the existing border fence as the backdrop of a late-January ad in which he declared he was running for Congress to stop the president from “destroying the American dream.” And at a recent candidate forum, all five Democratic candidates were critical of Hurd’s record on the issue though they largely agree on the need for comprehensive immigration reform.

Its current Representative, Republican Will Hurd, has been a vocal opponent of Trump’s proposal to construct a wall along the entirety of the southern border. Hurd is also the co-sponsor of a bipartisan bill that would offer a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and secure the border. In a statement to TIME, Hurd said that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have an obligation to help DACA recipients, regardless of party affiliation. “My

philosophy is simple: put together smart legislation, do it in a bipartisan way and actually solve the problem,” he says.

While Democrats are hoping to put up a fight this election cycle, Texas remains a Republican stronghold. And immigration fires up voters on the right, too.

“Immigration is a core issue for Republicans who generally are in favor of strong border control, stopping illegal immigration and limiting legal immigration,” says Jillson. “That position is held by, generally, older male white voters and they turn out in very substantial numbers.”

Victoria DeFrancesco Soto, a lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin’s Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, argues the issue could have mattered more than it likely will on Tuesday because Republicans in toss-up races could have been fending off competition from the far-right. “It was in the primary where it could have had the most impact because primary voters tend to run so much more to the extreme,” she says. “In the general, I think it will be used by Democrats to mobilize.”

That does not mean immigration has not come up in Republican primaries. Take the race to fill the seat left open by Republican Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, who announced he wouldn’t seek re-election after illicit images he’d sent a woman years ago leaked. Barton, whose district is home to at least 7,700 Dreamers, supports a legislative fix to DACA.

But in January, Republican candidates vying for his seat maligned immigrants with one suggesting that they should live out their dreams in their countries of origin, not America. Barton is holding out hope that a legislative fix will pass in Congress before the general election. Long term, he says, the Republican Party should be concerned about trying to grow its base to include more Latino voters, many of whom have direct ties to the immigrant community.

“Why we go out of our way to snub them and to exclude them from our Republican Party just doesn’t make sense to me,” he says.

Surges among Democrats could depend on minority and young voter turnout, which tends to be low in midterm elections, but the results from Tuesday night could give a sense of the level of engagement we can expect from so-called resistance voters come November.

Beyond Texas, Ali Noorani of the National Immigration Forum predicts that immigration will be a determining factor in the dozens of districts where voters supported Mitt Romney in 2012 and Hillary Clinton in 2016. Many of those voters were turned off by the anti-immigrant rhetoric, among other things, in the 2016 election. Inaction on DACA could further their displeasure with the turn the Republican Party has taken on the issue.

“There is a larger swath of the American electorate that has come to know, respect, and really admire immigrants and refugees in their communities,” he says.

Polls show that voters want a DACA fix. Around 8 in 10 Americans want the program to continue, a recent CNN poll found. A Harvard Center for American Political Studies-The Harris Center poll showed 76% of voters support a pathway to citizenship for so-called Dreamers, including 63% of Republicans. A Quinnipiac University poll from February also found some 58% of registered voters nationwide would blame Republicans if Congress failed to pass something to solve the issue.

There is still a slim chance that lawmakers act to solve the DACA fix before it's too late—both for Dreamers and the jeopardized Republican majority. Republican Sen. Jeff Flake is hoping a short-term solution can be affixed to an upcoming must-pass spending bill later this month. For young immigrants, that could further relieve the pressure they're facing without a permanent DACA fix. And Noorani says a save could be a boon for lawmakers on the right heading into November.

“If Republicans in the House and the Senate were actually to find a bipartisan solution for Dreamers, I think it would pay real dividends for them at the polls,” he says. “Right now, they are ceding that entire debate to Democrats.”

Saludos,

Javier Gamboa

DCCC Hispanic Media Director

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From: Meredith Kelly [Kelly@DCCC.ORG]
Sent: 3/6/2018 1:12:39 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-07: Axios - Why Democrats are happy about Texas' early voting numbers

Alexi McCammond 21 votes (0%)

Why Democrats are happy about Texas' early voting numbers

<https://www.axios.com/texas-primaries-today-early-voting-numbers-democrats-20eb7889-42a1-4a7e-a648-24cd4ed8b631.html>

There's been record early voting turnout in Democratic primaries across Texas's 15 largest counties. The Cook Political Report's Dave Wasserman noted a 105% spike compared to the 2014 midterm election — while Republican turnout only increased by 15%.

Why it matters: Democrats haven't won a statewide election in Texas since 1994, and the state hasn't voted for a Democrat in a presidential election since Jimmy Carter in 1976. But things are shifting this year, as Democrats are running in all of Texas' 36 congressional districts for the first time in 25 years. Wasserman's numbers suggest an energy that could threaten Republicans' seats across the state.

Show less

Yes, but: Early voting turnout like this is certainly a positive thing for Democrats running in Texas, but it's a limited sign of long-term success. If the party wants to turn the reddest state blue, these numbers would matter a lot more ahead of the general election in November.

One race to watch: TX-07, where Laura Moser is running against six other Democrats in a primary today. The DCCC recently released a brutal opposition memo encouraging Texas voters not to support Moser, calling her a "Washington insider who begrudgingly moved to Houston to run for Congress."

* Incumbent Republican Rep. John Culberson has held the seat for 17 years, so it'll be difficult for a progressive Democrat like Moser to succeed. But the Cook Political Report has now categorized the district as "toss up."

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From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 12:13:59 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: US News: Texas Voter Turnout Light So Far in Nation's First Primary

Texas Voter Turnout Light So Far in Nation's First Primary

Democrats turned out in force ahead of Texas' first-in-the-nation primary, even though their party remains a longshot to win much.

WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

<https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2018-03-06/democrats-big-texas-turnout-may-not-translate-to-many-wins>

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Democrats turned out in force ahead of the first-in-the-nation primary Tuesday in what could be an early hint of a midterm election backlash against President Donald Trump, though their party remains a longshot to make much of a dent in Republican political dominance of the state.

Democratic early voting across Texas' 15 most-populous counties, the only figures available, more than doubled that of the last non-presidential cycle in 2014, while the number of Republican early ballots cast increased only slightly. Total Democratic early votes exceeded Republican ones roughly 465,000 to 420,000, though those figures combined accounted for less than 9 percent of the state's total registered voters.

Democrats haven't won any of Texas' 29 statewide offices since 1994, the nation's longest losing streak. That's expected to continue this cycle despite any possible "Trump effect" because Democrats fielded little-known candidates against top Republicans, such as Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Even Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has been indicted on felony securities fraud charges, remains favored for re-election.

On Tuesday morning, voter turnout was light at some polling sites across the state. In Dallas, 64-year-old nurse practitioner Bonnie Kobilansky was among those voting at a local church. The Democrat said she has been alarmed by Trump.

"I would like to see a complete change in the top of the government. ... And that starts at the local level, the state level," she said after voting at a Dallas church for U.S. Senate candidate Beto O'Rourke, who has generated national buzz in his uphill bid against Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz.

Republican Laura Smith, who works in a dentist office, also voted Tuesday morning at the church. The 60-year-old said she approves of Trump's work so far on issues including immigration, saying: "I want people to be able to come here. That's what this country's all about. I want it done legally."

A record six Texas Republicans and two Democrats are leaving Congress, meaning the state will be losing clout on key House committees. But none of those open seats are expected to flip. They've drawn so many hopefuls from each party, that most primary races won't have anyone winning a majority of Tuesday's votes, meaning runoff elections May 22 will determine who will be on November's general election ballot.

Democrats have a better shot in November of unseating three Republican congressional incumbents — Rep. Pete Sessions in Dallas, Rep. John Culberson in Houston and Rep. Will Hurd in a district stretching hundreds of miles from San Antonio to El Paso. Hillary Clinton beat Trump in all three districts in 2016, but primary runoffs are likely in each of those races.

O'Rourke, a former punk rock guitarist, is one of the Democrats leaving his House seat. Neither he nor Cruz has faced serious primary challengers, but O'Rourke has outraised Cruz and the incumbent has warned conservatives against complacency, suggesting that liberals will "crawl over broken glass in November to vote," against Trump and the GOP.

The Democrats have had their own internal strife in Texas over congressional hopeful Laura Moser, who moved from Washington to her native Houston to try and unseat Culberson. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, fearing Moser may be too liberal to win the general election, blistered her for comments from a 2014 Washingtonian magazine article in which Moser said she'd "rather have her teeth pulled out" than live in rural Paris, Texas. Strategists will be watching if she advances to a runoff despite attacks from fellow Democrats.

Despite that, Texas Democratic Party chairman Gilberto Hinojosa has remained optimistic, noting that Trump beat Clinton by fewer than 10 percentage points in Texas in 2016, the smallest margin of victory for a Republican White House candidate since 1996.

"Texas is the fastest growing state in the country, we're getting younger and increasingly diverse," Hinojosa said. "These demographic shifts are a positive trendline for a big-tent progressive political party."

Republican political consultant Derek Ryan noted that only about 3 percent of those casting ballots early in the Democratic primary were first-time voters, meaning most Texans participating "were probably voting Democrat in general elections in previous cycles."

"Three percent, that could make a difference in some smaller races, but in a statewide election I don't think that's enough to sway anything," Ryan said. "Democrats are showing up in the primary election, does that mean more are going to show up in the general election?"

A close Republican primary race Tuesday could be for land commissioner, where George P. Bush was the first member of his family to win his first election four years ago but drew an unlikely challenger in Jerry Patterson, a former Bush supporter who preceded him as land commissioner.

Another key contest is the Democratic gubernatorial primary, where the top two contenders in a crowded field are former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez, backed by the party's establishment, and Andrew White, who opposes abortion and whose father, Mark, was governor in the 1980s. Neither White nor Valdez may win a majority of Tuesday's votes, though.

Abbott has an eye-popping \$43 million in campaign cash, tops among gubernatorial hopefuls nationwide, and isn't expected to be seriously challenged by any Democrat. Instead, he's focused on attempting to unseat members of his own party, endorsing the Republican primary challengers to three state House incumbents who backed past ethics reform measures that might have limited gubernatorial power. That includes state Rep. Sarah Davis, a suburban Houston Republican who supports abortion rights.

Davis counters that her district's residents "will not be told for whom to vote."

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 11:47:14 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: WHYY: A blue wave may be rising in ... Texas?

A blue wave may be rising in ... Texas?

Dick Polman // WHYY

<https://whyy.org/articles/blue-wave-may-rising-texas/>

Signs mark a polling site on March 2, 2018, as early voting begins, in San Antonio, Texas. (AP Photo/Eric Gay, File)

Welcome to the 2018 election season! It starts today with congressional primaries in Texas, but hundreds of thousands of people have already voted early. And the turnout stats have triggered a full-scale Republican freakout.

If these were normal times, we wouldn't bother to look at early-voting numbers in red Texas. It's been a virtual one-party state since the mid-1990s, typically with anemic Democratic turnout. But even in Texas we're now starting to see the makings of a national blue-wave backlash against the very stable genius.

As Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said last week, in a four-alarm email to GOP insiders, "I'll be blunt. Democrat voter turnout is surging statewide. [It] should shock every conservative to their core ... We had always hoped the liberal blue wave would never hit Texas."

Granted, early voting means it's still early. But seasoned Texas political operatives have never seen stats like this. The Texas secretary of state tracks early turnout in the 15 highest voting counties, and, after measuring apples to apples — early voting turnout for these midterm primaries, compared to early voting turnout for the 2014 midterm primaries — the office found that participation on the Republican side jumped 15 percent. A standard increase for the GOP.

Early voting on the Democratic side spiked 105 percent.

That's why Republicans are freaked. They typically have twice as many voters during the early phase; this year, for the first time, they had fewer than the Democrats.

Under Texas rules, all voters can choose either party's primary ballot; if they want to be Democrats for a day, they're free to do so. In other words, the Democratic early-voting surge was fueled by Texans who wanted to go blue. And one Texas firm that works for Republicans, having crunched the numbers, discovered that one-fourth of the people who voted blue early had never voted before. In the words of Texas Republican consultant Matt Mackowiak, the "surprisingly high" early Democratic turnout "could prove an enthusiasm advantage."

None of this means that Democrats will sweep the Texas congressional races in November (although two GOP incumbents, Pete Sessions in suburban Dallas and John Culberson in suburban Houston, are vulnerable). But it definitely means that, just as Republicans are feeling the heat in their swing-state bailiwicks (including southwest Pennsylvania, which has a special congressional election next Tuesday), they're also under the gun in normally red enclaves. It's no coincidence that the early-voting stats that have triggered Texas Republican panic come at a time when Gallup is pegging Trump's popularity at 39 percent — in Texas.

As Ted Cruz, who's up for re-election to the Senate, recently warned, grassroots Democrats would "crawl over broken glass in November to vote We could get obliterated at the polls."

He probably said that in order to stoke donations to his '18 campaign, but guess what: He needs to stoke donations, because lately his Democratic opponent, El Paso congressman Robert "Beto" O'Rourke, has kicked Cruz's butt on the money front. It's hard to imagine that Cruz would actually lose his seat in November (Texas hasn't elected a Democratic

senator since 1988), but it's a true enthusiasm metric that during the last quarter of 2017 and the first six weeks of 2018, O'Rourke out-raised Cruz by nearly two to one (\$4.7 million to \$2.6 million).

Cal Jillson, a political analyst at Southern Methodist University, framed the big picture for NPR: "Going into this year, there was an expectation following the Women's March, in the wake of the elections in New Jersey and Virginia and all these special elections, that something similar was likely to happen in the first-in-the-nation Texas primary, and I think it has. It signals a Democratic electorate that is motivated to make a statement against Donald Trump."

But fear not, GOP, because Trump is on the case. As dawn broke on another day in dystopia, he worked his thumbs and came up with this: "The new Fake News narrative is that there is CHAOS in the White House. Wrong! People will always come & go, and I want strong dialogue before making a final decision. I still have some people that I want to change (always seeking perfection). There is no Chaos, only great Energy!"

Yup, he's always seeking perfection. Feel better now, Republican voters?

That should be enough to stoke your turnout and blunt the blue wave.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 10:10:21 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Christian Science Monitor: Democrats hope for a blue wave in Texas midterm primaries

Democrats hope for a blue wave in Texas midterm primaries

Will Weissert // Christian Science Monitor

<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2018/0306/Democrats-hope-for-a-blue-wave-in-Texas-midterm-primaries>

Little-known Democratic candidates are lining up to topple Republican incumbents in efforts to end the nation's longest losing streak: A Democrat hasn't won any of Texas' 29 statewide offices since 1994.

MARCH 6, 2018 AUSTIN, TEXAS—Texas Democrats turned out in force ahead of the first-in-the-nation primary Tuesday in what could be an early hint of a midterm election backlash against President Trump, but their party remains a long shot to make much of a dent in Republican political dominance of the state.

Democratic early voting across Texas' 15 most-populous counties, the only figures available, more than doubled that of the last non-presidential cycle in 2014, while the number of Republican early ballots cast increased only slightly. Total Democratic early votes exceeded Republican ones roughly 465,000 to 420,000, though those figures combined accounted for less than 9 percent of the state's total registered voters.

Democrats haven't won any of Texas' 29 statewide offices since 1994, the nation's longest losing streak. That's expected to continue this cycle despite any possible "Trump effect" because Democrats fielded little-known candidates against top Republicans such as Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Even Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has been indicted on felony securities fraud charges, remains favored for re-election.

A record six Texas Republicans and two Democrats are leaving Congress, meaning the state will be losing clout on key House committees. But none of those open seats are expected to flip. They've drawn so many hopefuls from each party, that most primary races won't have anyone winning a majority of Tuesday's votes, meaning runoff elections May 22 will determine who will be on November's general election ballot.

Democrats have a better shot in November of unseating three Republican congressional incumbents – Rep. Pete Sessions in Dallas, Rep. John Culberson in Houston and Rep. Will Hurd in a district stretching hundreds of miles from San Antonio to El Paso. Hillary Clinton beat Trump in all three districts in 2016, but primary runoffs are likely in each of those races.

One of the Democrats leaving his House seat, former punk rock guitarist Beto O'Rourke, has generated national buzz in his uphill bid against Republican US Sen. Ted Cruz. Neither faced serious primary challengers but Mr. O'Rourke has out-raised Senator Cruz and the incumbent has warned conservatives against complacency, suggesting that liberals will "crawl over broken glass in November to vote," against Mr. Trump and the GOP.

The Democrats have had their own internal strife in Texas over congressional hopeful Laura Moser, who moved from Washington to her native Houston to try and unseat Representative Culberson. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, fearing Ms. Moser may be too liberal to win the general election, blistered her for comments from a 2014 Washingtonian magazine article in which Moser said she'd "rather have her teeth pulled out" than live in rural Paris, Texas. Strategists will be watching if she advances to a runoff despite attacks from fellow Democrats.

Despite that, Texas Democratic Party chairman Gilberto Hinojosa has remained optimistic, noting that Trump beat Mrs. Clinton by fewer than 10 percentage points in Texas in 2016, the smallest margin of victory for a Republican White House candidate since 1996.

"Texas is the fastest growing state in the country, we're getting younger and increasingly diverse," Mr. Hinojosa said. "These demographic shifts are a positive trend line for a big-tent progressive political party."

Republican political consultant Derek Ryan noted that only about 3 percent of those casting ballots early in the Democratic primary were first-time voters, meaning most Texans participating "were probably voting Democrat in general elections in previous cycles."

"Three percent, that could make a difference in some smaller races, but in a statewide election I don't think that's enough to sway anything," Mr. Ryan said. "Democrats are showing up in the primary election, does that mean more are going to show up in the general election?"

A close Republican primary race Tuesday could be for land commissioner, where George P. Bush was the first member of his family to win his first election four years ago but drew an unlikely challenger in Jerry Patterson, a former Bush supporter who preceded him as land commissioner.

Another key contest is the Democratic gubernatorial primary, where the top two contenders in a crowded field are former Dallas County Sherriff Lupe Valdez, backed by the party's establishment, and Andrew White, who opposes abortion and whose father, Mark, was governor in the 1980s. Neither Mr. White nor Mr. Valdez may win a majority of Tuesday's votes, though.

Governor Abbott has an eye-popping \$43 million in campaign cash, tops among gubernatorial hopefuls nationwide, and isn't expected to be seriously challenged by any Democrat. Instead, he's focused on attempting to unseat members of his own party, endorsing the Republican primary challengers to three state House incumbents who backed past ethics reform measures that might have limited gubernatorial power. That includes state Rep. Sarah Davis, a suburban Houston Republican who supports abortion rights.

Representative Davis counters that her district's residents "will not be told for whom to vote."

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 10:06:54 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: MSNBC: Texas primary day!

Steve Kornacki is so excited.

<http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=7a035705-8732-4bbf-b66f-8589379752ee>

it's tuesday, primary day if the great stoksate of texas. this year there are democrats running in every seasoningle one of the state's 36 congressionals. texas is a very red state, and in many many places, democrats chances are very very slim. in more key districts that we are watching today, the chances are higher. msnbc von is in texas. von, this is one of the districts demes think they could actually flip, right.

reporter: yeah, hey halle this is the 26th district. there's an open seat. there are four candidates on the democrat side. hays county, if the republicans want any seat in this state this is one of the places they're going to have to look. one of the ainfluence suburbs, highly educated. they're looking for frustrated women voters, republicans. back in 2012 it went for mitt ramny by 11 points. it should be noted whb we're looking at these races, halle, republicans are still optimistic about their chances. they believe what is happening over at the administration with the white house they're able to separate they're members from, whether it's will hurd down in the 23rd district or few down in the 21st. this is what willa had to tell us about her vote here today. when you see what the administration is going through, does that make you any more inclined to voetd democrat based off what is happening in the white house?

no i still wouldn't vote democrat i would find another wouldn't change my whole mind set to democrat, no.

reporter: melissa said, halle she's sympathetic to immigrant and she also wants to see tighter gun control. at the same time she said she's here putting her ballot for republicans and every sbng of doing so despite what trafficroason is on the ballot.

have fun down in texas.

steve kornacki is at the big board. it's not just the 21st to watch right if.

no. maybe they can pick up some seats, von is in the 21st district, the 23rd right along the border there's bill hurd. another one will be right if the suburbs of texas, at the 7th district there. right up here sort of a north dallas suburb, each one of these are republican held seats. the democrats have an eye on this election. let's take a deeper dive in that last one, the 32nd north dallas suburbs, pete sessions have been there for two decades now. he's running for re-election. there's a number of republicans around the country that's sort of like pete sessions. they've been there for a while, had safe districts, never had to sweat re-election. in 2012, this has been par for the course for this district, republican mitt romny wins it. along comes donald trump and the voters in the 32nd vote democratic in that race in 2016. in the trump mitt term with trump struggling a bit, pete sessions, in traditional republicans, these are the republicans that are facing something they haven't faced before, very tough re-election races. now democrats have to get their candidate there in the district, this is one that they definitely have an eye on there in texas. this is the district that has characteristics that you'll see throughout the country in the next few months.

my understanding there are a bunch of democrats running, the chance for a run off is high for those who end up in the top two. how do you see that playing out with the democratic vote when it comes to going up against, for example, sessions?

sessions is seeing something he hasn't seen in a listening time, that is an abundance of candidates in a district like this. or a district across the state, suddenly they've got too many candidates. they've actually got a candidate running getting some support who national democrats are worried about, not sort of trying to destroy their campaign. they don't have

that issue in the 32nd, it seems likely in this district and others, you're not going to get a winner tonight. you're going to have which two are running against each other in a few weeks for the right to go against sessions.

steve, how do you think it going to go? how late will you be up?

i'll be up well before midnight, but we should know something by then. this is the first one, the midterms are here.

thank you steve. appreciate it. amber and sabrina still here with me. thoughts on texas?

i think democrats have had a long time chance of trying to turn texas to the shade of blue. it's not happening any time soon. but, texas democrats say they had sped up their plans. a few data points they shared with me yesterday was that early voting members are more than doubled and at least 15 counties for democrats. in some key counties and some key districts specifically, it is matching the 2016 presidential primary and that will suggest democrats, which was a competitive primary in texas between bernie sanders and hillary clinton that democrats are doing what opt tiffs don't think they do. come out and vote in high levels in midterm elections.

certainly in many ways texas is a bell for some of the enthusiasm we have seen in the trump era. we not only have an uptake in democratic situation but democratic are saying who are seeking federal and state office in texas. i think the question remains whether they can sustain that momentum into november where they previously has, looking at previous midterms suffer the come out. we should not bank --

right.

republicans who are sceptical of trump turning entirely into voting for democrats and supporting them on the ballot. that was a miscalculation we made in 2016 thinking trump was susceptible. you will not see it happening this time.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 2/24/2018 9:02:14 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-07: Time: The Democratic Party Just Attacked Their Own Candidate in Texas

The Democratic Party Just Attacked Their Own Candidate in Texas

Charlotte Alter // Time

<http://time.com/5173446/dccc-laura-moser-texas/>

Normally, the Democratic party tends to stay out of the Democratic primary. But yesterday, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee did something unusual. They posted a list of reasons why Texans should vote against Laura Moser, one of seven candidates running for the Democratic nomination in Texas's 7th district.

At first glance, Moser is exactly the type of candidate who could lead to a Democratic sweep in the midterms. A journalist and mother of two who started activist program Daily Action after Donald Trump's election, Moser moved back to the Houston area this year to run to unseat Rep. John Culberson (R-Texas). Like hundreds of other women around the country, she transformed from voter to activist to candidate as part of the so-called Pink Wave of fresh women candidates challenging GOP incumbents.

But the DCCC isn't buying it. On Thursday, they posted the type of opposition research against Moser that the party normally uses to target Republicans, not Democrats. They pointed out that Moser just moved back to the area from Washington, D.C., has paid more than \$50,000 in campaign money to her husband's consulting firm, and wrote in a 2014 op-ed that she would rather have her "teeth pulled" than move back to a rural town in Texas. The Democratic primary is March 6, and early voting is already underway.

"Voters in Houston have organized for over a year to hold Representative Culberson accountable and win this Clinton district," said DCCC communications director Meredith Kelly in a statement. "Unfortunately, Laura Moser's outright disgust for life in Texas disqualifies her as a general election candidate, and would rob voters of their opportunity to flip Texas' 7th in November."

A Democratic insider said that the party has plenty of good candidates who can beat Culberson, but that if Moser won the primary, these revelations would "take the race off the map." EMILY's List also declined to endorse Moser, picking her primary opponent, Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, instead.

Moser says the announcement caught her completely off guard.

"I did not expect this to come from my own party," she said in an interview Friday. "I've been a loyal, lifelong, establishment Democrat. I've worked hard for every Democratic candidate since I've been in 5th grade."

While some local outlets have painted the squabble as reminiscent of the intra-party disputes during the 2016 presidential primary, both Moser and party insiders insist the divide is not ideological. And, unlike Bernie Sanders in the 2016 primary, Moser has not made attacking the Democratic party part of her messaging.

"I think it's unfortunate that we are eating our own," Moser says, adding that she has strong grassroots support and is not much further left than the Democratic party platform. "I don't know why they would be scared of someone who supports the same things they say they support."

Locals say Moser would be a long shot against Culberson, not because of her “teeth pulled” comment (she was referring to a rural town where her grandparents live, far outside her suburban Houston district), but because the region is still very conservative.

“I guarantee she’s not going to be where a majority of the voters are on guns and abortions and taxes, and that’s why she’s gonna lose,” says Joe Brettell, a GOP consultant who lives in Katy, Texas, near Moser’s district. “There’s no way an uber-progressive like Ms. Moser is going to get elected. It has nothing to do with some arcane article from her past.”

Brettell says the Democrats are now in the same position Republican party leaders found themselves in during the Tea Party wave, confronted with a surge of passionate, but possibly unelectable, candidates.

“You’re looking at a candidate and saying ‘wow the grassroots are gonna support her and we’re gonna lose in the general,’” he says.

“It’s very disappointing that I would be thrown overboard without even having been given a chance to run my race,” Moser says. “The Democratic party shouldn’t fear candidates like me, they should embrace us.”

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 2/23/2018 8:05:08 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Breitbart: Texas Democrat Voters Turning Out in Record Numbers for Primaries

Texas Democrat Voters Turning Out in Record Numbers for Primaries

Lana Shadwick // Breitbart

<http://www.breitbart.com/texas/2018/02/22/texas-democrat-voters-turning-record-numbers-primaries/>

Democrat voters are turning out in record numbers in the primaries in the historically politically-red Lone Star State. Experts say the Democrat Party wants a robust primary so they can go back to these voters and get them out for the November election.

The actual figures reported for the first day of early voting in the Republican and Democrat primaries are at this link on the Texas Secretary of State website.

Looking at the 15 counties with the most registered voters, Texas Election Source reports that results for the first day of early voting in Texas show Democrats voted 102 percent above what they voted in gubernatorial election year 2014, and 10 percent above their voting in presidential election year 2016. By contrast, voting among Republicans is down four percent from 2014, and down seven percent from 2016.

Texas Election Source reported that the percentage of registered voters that went to the polls or returned ballots by mail on the first day of voting is 0.42 percent.

Like 2018, 2014 is a gubernatorial election year, and thus voting comparisons are made to that year.

The historically largest politically red percentage voting county in Texas, Montgomery County, saw a 395 percent Democrat voting increase over 2014. Republican numbers in the county that includes Republican contested races for county judge and county commissioners, and a contested Texas State House position, among others, is up just nine percent, reported Texas Election Source.

Harris County in the Houston area had Democrats voters up 139 percent, and Republican voters down 14 percent. The totals of 9,647 Republican votes to the 8,007 Democrat votes include in-person and mail-in-ballots, the Texas election analysis source reported.

Harris County County Clerk Stan Stanart told Breitbart Texas that there were "lots of ballot by mail applications but the numbers were not as high as in 2008 when President Obama was elected." That year, most Republican officeholders and jurists lost their positions in what had been a red-voting county for many years. Stanart said Democrats could decide to use these voting rolls in their get out the vote efforts.

Harris County's chief election clerk said it is too early to know, but it looks like the turnout will be greater than 2014, the last gubernatorial cycle.

In Tarrant County, Democratic voting is up 82 percent, while the Republican vote is down 12 percent from 2014. Democratic voting at the polls in and around San Antonio in Bexar County is 31 percent higher than in 2014 and 11 percent lower for Republicans. This figure does not include ballot-by-mail voting.

Collin, Denton, and Galveston county participation has been "fairly high" as described by one political science professor. Nueces County has been an exception to that unusually high Democratic 2018 turnout.

University of Houston Professor Brandon J. Rottinghaus told Breitbart Texas that the “clear spike” in Democrat voting gives “Democrats reason to be enthusiastic but not celebratory.” He added, “There is a lot of time between now and the general election.”

Rottinghaus told Breitbart Texas that Democrats usually vote at half of what Republicans do in the primaries, so they do not have the voter lists to use in the general election in November. This is why Democrats have not been as successful in midterm elections. “A Party wants a robust primary to go back to in November,” he said. “This is a step for Democrats to have potential voters to talk to in November.”

The UofH political professor said there had not been a lot of “cross-over voting.”

Moreover, the Houston-based political expert said, “Some counties have had an increase in the percentage of voters who have never participated.” He explained that these voters could be first-time voters or voters that are new to Texas.

This year the Democratic primary is loaded with contested campaigns, including those running for governor.

Professor Jay Kumar Aiyer, politics and policy professor at Texas Southern University, told Breitbart Texas that “Overall, turnout is good for both Parties.” He also added that in general, the larger counties are driven by local races.

Aiyer noted that the congressional seat in CD-7 for long-term incumbent John Culberson’s seat, and in CD-32 for incumbent Republican Pete Sessions’ race, was kicking up the voter anthill.

The contest for retiring Congressman Lamar Smith in Texas’ CD-21 is also driving voter participation. There are 18 Republicans and four Democrats vying for that position. Attendance is being somewhat driven by the bid to replace Democrat Rep. Gene Green in CD-29. Green has represented that district since 1993.

The Texas Southern University professor explained that there is less Republican statewide interest because the top of the ticket is largely uncontested. It is the congressional and local races that get the turnout, he said.

Aiyer says it is too early to tell, we “probably need a week or so, but Republican voters will probably be the same as in 2014 which was a good year.” He contrasted the Democrats by saying their numbers have been “much higher pretty dramatically statewide.” He explained that Democrat motivation is being driven by “(1) contested races, and (2) the national tendency for the Party out of power to come out.”

The political and policy professor said while there is “push-back” against the Party whose president is in power, and that was true when President Obama was in office, this political cycle is driven by the Democrats’ feelings about President Donald Trump. He explained, “This is different from in the past, this president is pretty unpopular as compared to last presidential candidates.”

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 8:30:47 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Playbook: Playbook: Texas kicks off primary season, as Democrats surge in early voting

Playbook: Texas kicks off primary season, as Democrats surge in early voting

By ANNA PALMER (anna@politico.com; @apalmerdc), JAKE SHERMAN (sherman@politico.com; @JakeSherman) and DANIEL LIPPMAN (daniel@politico.com; @dlippman) 03/06/2018 06:11 AM EST
<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/playbook/2018/03/06/texas-primary-democratic-turnout-252732>

DRIVING THE DAY

SOMETHING MIGHT BE HAPPENING IN THE LONGHORN STATE -- Early voting numbers in Texas has GOP political operatives nervous -- Democrats outvoted Republicans in the top 15 counties. BY THE NUMBERS: 23.7% of Democratic primary voters are new. Only 10.8% of Republicans were first-time early voters in the primary.

THE TRENDLINE: Republicans are worried that could translate to a significant increase in Democratic-leaning general election voters across the state -- and, in worst case for Republicans, across the country. Check out this three-page PDF breaking down the stats: <http://politi.co/2tld376>

-- TEXAS TRIBUNE'S ANNIE DANIEL: "[More than] 650,000 Texans voted early in the state's ten counties with the highest number of registered voters.

"Overall, 370,219 Democrats voted early in those ten counties compared to 282,928 Republicans. Four years earlier, Republicans outvoted Democrats in early voting in those ten counties 253,019 to 184,489, respectively. That means Democratic turnout more than doubled from four years ago, while Republican turnout rose less than 15 percent.

"When we factor population growth in these ten counties, Republican turnout was largely unchanged, with the percent of the voting-age population voting early remaining on-trend with previous years. Democratic turnout, however, was up in all ten counties except for Hidalgo County, which saw a drop in Democratic voter turnout from 6.1% of the voting age population voting early in 2014, to 5.1% in 2018." <http://bit.ly/2FgBBnt>

STEVEN SHEPARD and ELENA SCHNEIDER: "5 things to watch in the first primary of 2018": 1. Democrats are showing up in droves 2. Suburban watch: Dallas and Houston 3. Washington meddling in Democratic primaries 4. The personality primaries 5. A threat to the Bush name. Read the full story <http://politi.co/2tlgjzh>

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 8:26:13 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-07/TX-all: ABC Note: The Note: Democrats fighting each other as primaries begin

The Note: Democrats fighting each other as primaries begin

RICK KLEIN MARYALICE PARKS // ABC News

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/note-democrats-fighting-primaries-begin/story?id=53542571>

The TAKE with Rick Klein

Primary season 2018 has Democrats thinking big. So why does it feel so much like 2016?

These should be heady times for the party of the “resistance.” President Donald Trump is overseeing a chaotic White House, with an approval rating mired in the 30s; the president’s policy gyrations are making GOP members of Congress squirm; Robert Mueller’s probe is even forcing new, bizarre plot twists.

Yet the storylines going into the first 2018 primaries, being held today in Texas, are of overstuffed Democratic fields, and of establishment-led efforts to thin them out.

One of today’s marquee races, in the Clinton-carried Houston suburbs of Texas’ 7th Congressional District, features the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee trying to disqualify a progressive favorite. On cue, progressive organizations rallied to her side – with memories still raw from the Hillary-vs.-Bernie feuds of two years ago.

Yes, Democratic enthusiasm is fueling record-setting early voting in Texas. But the challenge for Democrats will be keeping that going for another eight months – with a whole lot of rough-and-tumble politics being played along the way.

The RUNDOWN with MaryAlice Parks

“I like him. I like him not. I like him...”

Every Republican candidate is going to have to land on one of those answers about the president, and with primary season now officially in full swing, the days and options for petal-picking are ticking down.

It’s a tricky question for traditional Republicans, just when every voter is focusing in, and the president is not making it easy for them to stick together.

Hiked tariffs, as the president is pushing, are antithetical to the free-trade pillars of the ‘old’ Grand Old Party. House Speaker Paul Ryan said as much yesterday.

Now with another senior Republican lawmaker, Sen. Thad Cochran, announcing his retirement, and putting two U.S. Senate seats in his ruby-red Mississippi on the ballot, Republicans will have yet another outlet for duking out their disagreements.

The TIP with Emily Goodin

Former Rep. Steve Israel, who served as Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chairman during his congressional tenure, talked about the races that would keep him up at night if he were running the campaign committee this cycle.

The first House primaries of the 2018 midterm take place today as Texas voters head to the polls.

First of all, Israel pointed out: "Democrats have to hold 19 seats. People are forgetting that. They are thinking about Republican pickups. Democrats still have to hold 19 of their frontline seats, including six open seats."

Democrats need to net 24 seats to retake control of the House. But some of their own seats they need to protect include: Rep. Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey and the seats of retiring Reps. Tim Walz and Rick Nolan in Minnesota, and Carol Shea Porter in New Hampshire.

Then, a few GOP seats opening up are on the must-win list: Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's in Florida, Martha McSally's in Arizona, Rodney Frelinghuysen's in New Jersey, and Patrick Meehan's in Pennsylvania.

Finally, there are some likely GOP seats that, if Democrats win them election night, would indicate that a blue tide is about to sweep the House: Reps. Mike Coffman's in Colorado, Carlos Curbelo's in Florida, Don Bacon's in Nebraska, Barbara Comstock's in Virginia, Will Hurd's in Kentucky, and Andy Barr's in Kentucky.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 8:15:21 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Huffington Post: Democratic Party Set To Show Its Force In Nation's First 2018 Primary

Democratic Party Set To Show Its Force In Nation's First 2018 Primary

Democrats in Texas have turned out in massive numbers for early voting.

Amanda Terkel // Huffington Post

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/texas-primaries_us_5a9d7633e4b0479c0255c1ed

Texas holds the nation's first primaries of the year on Tuesday, previewing whether reinvigorated Democrats will turn out in big numbers for the November midterms.

Early voting in Texas, which lasted 11 days and ended on Friday, is way up since the last midterm elections — a nearly 50 percent increase. In fact, Texas' 15 largest counties have broken records for early turnout in a non-presidential election year.

The increase was driven by Democrats.

More than 465,245 early votes were cast in the state's Democratic primaries this year, compared to over 420,329 in the Republican races. In 2014, by contrast, Republicans outpaced Democrats in early voting — 365,423 voters to 226,730.

Dave Wasserman

✓

@Redistrict

Breaking: in TX's 15 largest counties, early voting in Dem primary spiked 105% (!) vs. 2014 midterm, vs. just 15% in GOP primary. Enthusiasm gap should be major warning for GOP.

6:18 PM - Mar 3, 2018

13.1K

4,595 people are talking about this

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"After the 2016 election, Texas became a single-digit state," Texas Democratic Party spokesman Tariq Thowfeek said, referring to Donald Trump carrying it by 9 percentage points, whereas for decades GOP presidential candidates won it by double digits.

"We watched that progressive energy grow into a record-breaking number of candidates and an incredible excitement around the March primary," Thowfeek said. "It's clear that folks are fired up, exceeding all expectations, and voting in force. Texas Democrats are poised to have to the best midterm of our lifetime."

In many previous campaign cycles, Democrats failed to even field a candidate in some Republican-held districts. But not this year.

According to NPR, 111 Democrats are running for the U.S. House in Texas, with contenders on the ballot in all 36 of the state's congressional districts. It's the first time this has happened in 25 years.

A particular target for Democrats are districts that voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election but are currently represented by a GOP congressman — seats like the 7th District, held by Rep. John Culberson, and the 32nd, held by Rep. Pete Sessions.

Such a high number of Democratic candidates means there are some crowded primaries — four districts have seven running — which has led to a bit of intra-party fighting.

Laura Moser, a Democrat running for her party's nomination in Texas' 7th U.S. House District, faces opposition from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

In the race in Culberson's district, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has inserted itself into the primary by publicly releasing opposition research on digital activist Laura Moser. The DCCC, which focuses on electing Democrats to the House, has such research on its website against just two people: Moser and a Republican running in a Pennsylvania special congressional election next week.

The DCCC hasn't endorsed any of Moser's six opponents, but it argues she that she won't be able to win in the general election. EMILY's List, the pro-choice Democratic women's group, is backing corporate attorney Lizzie Pannill Fletcher in the district.

The establishment getting involved so heavily has upset many activists and highlights the potential for future splits in a party that has stood relatively unified in post-Trump resistance work.

Republicans traditionally have an advantage in midterm elections, making a potential Democratic surge on Tuesday even more significant.

In the battle for state legislative seats in Texas, Democrats aren't playing in every district, but the party does have a larger presence than in recent years.

Already, Democrats have been performing far better than expected in state legislative elections since Trump became president. The party has flipped 39 seats from red to blue, compared to just four that have gone from blue to red. Democrats also won the U.S. Senate special election in Alabama.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 8:13:08 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: WTOP: Democrats hopeful as Texas opens midterm primary season

Democrats hopeful as Texas opens midterm primary season

AP

<https://wtop.com/national/2018/03/democrats-big-texas-turnout-may-not-translate-to-many-wins/>

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Democrats turned out in force ahead of the first-in-the-nation primary Tuesday in what could be an early hint of a midterm election backlash against President Donald Trump, but their party remains a longshot to make much of a dent in Republican political dominance of the state.

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Democrats have a better shot in November of unseating three Republican congressional incumbents — Rep. Pete Sessions in Dallas, Rep. John Culberson in Houston and Rep. Will Hurd in a district stretching hundreds of miles from San Antonio to El Paso. Hillary Clinton beat Trump in all three districts in 2016, but primary runoffs are likely in each of those races.

One of the Democrats leaving his House seat, former punk rock guitarist Beto O'Rourke, has generated national buzz in his uphill bid against Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz. Neither faced serious primary challengers but O'Rourke has outraised Cruz and the incumbent has warned conservatives against complacency, suggesting that liberals will "crawl over broken glass in November to vote," against Trump and the GOP.

The Democrats have had their own internal strife in Texas over congressional hopeful Laura Moser, who moved from Washington to her native Houston to try and unseat Culberson. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, fearing Moser may be too liberal to win the general election, blistered her for comments from a 2014 Washingtonian magazine article in which Moser said she'd "rather have her teeth pulled out" than live in rural Paris, Texas. Strategists will be watching if she advances to a runoff despite attacks from fellow Democrats.

Despite that, Texas Democratic Party chairman Gilberto Hinojosa has remained optimistic, noting that Trump beat Clinton by fewer than 10 percentage points in Texas in 2016, the smallest margin of victory for a Republican White House candidate since 1996.

"Texas is the fastest growing state in the country, we're getting younger and increasingly diverse," Hinojosa said. "These demographic shifts are a positive trendline for a big-tent progressive political party."

Republican political consultant Derek Ryan noted that only about 3 percent of those casting ballots early in the Democratic primary were first-time voters, meaning most Texans participating “were probably voting Democrat in general elections in previous cycles.”

“Three percent, that could make a difference in some smaller races, but in a statewide election I don’t think that’s enough to sway anything,” Ryan said. “Democrats are showing up in the primary election, does that mean more are going to show up in the general election?”

A close Republican primary race Tuesday could be for land commissioner, where George P. Bush was the first member of his family to win his first election four years ago but drew an unlikely challenger in Jerry Patterson, a former Bush supporter who preceded him as land commissioner.

Another key contest is the Democratic gubernatorial primary, where the top two contenders in a crowded field are former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez, backed by the party’s establishment, and Andrew White, who opposes abortion and whose father, Mark, was governor in the 1980s. Neither White nor Valdez may win a majority of Tuesday’s votes, though.

Abbott has an eye-popping \$43 million in campaign cash, tops among gubernatorial hopefuls nationwide, and isn’t expected to be seriously challenged by any Democrat. Instead, he’s focused on attempting to unseat members of his own party, endorsing the Republican primary challengers to three state House incumbents who backed past ethics reform measures that might have limited gubernatorial power. That includes state Rep. Sarah Davis, a suburban Houston Republican who supports abortion rights.

Davis counters that her district’s residents “will not be told for whom to vote.”

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 8:08:25 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: NPR: In Texas Primary, Early Signs Of A 2018 Democratic Surge

In Texas Primary, Early Signs Of A 2018 Democratic Surge

Jessica Taylor // NPR

<http://wwik.org/post/texas-primary-early-signs-2018-democratic-surge#stream/0>

The 2018 primary elections kick off this week, and Democrats are already seeing reasons to be excited deep in the red, beating heart of Texas.

The Lone Star State holds the nation's first primary on Tuesday, and in the 11 days of early voting Democrats reached record levels in a midterm year. They surpassed GOP early voting turnout this year and their own party's numbers during the same period in 2016, a presidential election year where voting numbers are typically much higher, and more than doubled their turnout from the last midterm election in 2014.

The rising Democratic enthusiasm mirrors what the party has already seen across the country in the nearly year and a half since President Trump was elected — more than three dozen state legislature seats changing hands, important wins in Virginia and New Jersey last year and mobilization through rallies and protests.

Texas's primary brings the first actual voting in the 2018 midterm cycle, giving both parties a chance for a more concrete measure ahead of November's elections. Early signs of such a swell in a bulwark red state could be an even more ominous sign for Republicans nationally this fall if it's borne out by Tuesday's results.

"Texas is the nation's bellwether right now," said Tariq Thowfeek, the communications director for the Texas Democratic Party. "It's a good gauge of the incredible progressive energy we have across the country in a state that is ranked at the bottom of the barrel in voter turnout."

The Cook Political Report's David Wasserman found that in the top 15 counties in the state, the Democratic early vote had spiked 105 percent over 2014 numbers. On the Republican side, there had been only a 15 percent uptick.

A surge in Democrats on the ballot

It's not just an uptick in Democratic voters happening in Texas, but an increase in candidates putting their names on the ballot, too. Democrats are fielding a modern-day record number of candidates across the state. There are 111 U.S. House candidates running for the minority party, and they are spread across all 36 Texas congressional districts — the first time that's happened in 25 years, and a departure from two years ago when Democrats didn't run candidates in eight seats.

On a state legislative level, Democrats have candidates in 132 of the 150 state House districts and in 14 of the 15 state Senate districts up for election this year. That includes four Senate districts where Democrats didn't field candidates in 2014 or 2012, and 20 new House districts where they didn't have candidates in either 2016, 2014 or 2012.

Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University, said that the Democratic surge is even more impressive given that it's usually GOP voters, not Democrats, who have been reliable in non-presidential years.

"It's one word — enthusiasm. In a midterm election like this, what you normally expect to see is the Republicans' primary turnout might be twice what the Democratic turnout is, so to have the Democrats even with, and even slightly ahead, of Republicans in this midterm election is really extraordinary," Jillson said.

Key suburban swing districts are likely to determine control of the House in 2018. There are several GOP-held districts like that which could be at play in Texas, such as Rep. Pete Sessions's suburban Dallas seat and Rep. John Culberson's

suburban Houston district, which, along with Rep. Will Hurd's expansive border district that runs from San Antonio to El Paso, all voted for Hillary Clinton over Trump in 2016.

"Going into this year, there was an expectation following the Women's March, in the wake of the elections in New Jersey and Virginia and all these special elections that something similar was likely to happen in the first-in-the-nation Texas primary, and I think it has," SMU's Jillson said. "It signals a Democratic electorate that is motivated to make a statement against Donald Trump, and that motivation is nowhere more powerful than in female voters."

There's been a downside to the Democrats' surge of candidates in some places, however. In the primary to face Culberson, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee recently lobbed attacks against one candidate they didn't feel would be a strong challenger given past derisive comments about places in the state. That move prompted a backlash from some progressive groups and criticism from the head of the Democratic National Committee.

Matt Angle, a longtime Texas Democratic strategist and director of the Lone Star Project, said the sheer number of candidates was still a positive thing for Democrats in a state where they've had trouble recruiting in the past, and noted that other primaries have been more civil. Those are encouraging signs, he said, for the way the state is trending politically.

"Make no mistake — it's a tough lift in Texas. It's a state still that is a right of center state, but I'm very encouraged," Angle said. "The excitement being generated now among candidates will not only build, it will consolidate."

Backlash to Trump

President Trump under-performed past GOP presidential nominees in the state, carrying it in 2016 by only single digits, and a Gallup poll released at the end of January showed that the president's approval rating in Texas had dropped below 40 percent.

While Trump's approval among Republican base voters remains strong, that dissatisfaction with the president is certainly driving Democratic turnout and convincing more disaffected voters to turn blue, Angle argued. For example, that has helped Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke in his upstart campaign to unseat Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. While O'Rourke still remains an underdog, he's been drawing large crowds and has even outraised Cruz recently with the help of small-dollar donors.

"In Texas, I think what you do have a chance to do is build a really strong coalition of Democrats, independents and fair-minded Republicans who are disillusioned with the type of leadership they're getting," Angle said.

Texas GOP strategist Derek Ryan pointed out that Democrats do have some major statewide primaries, such as the gubernatorial race, that could be driving some turnout, but admitted that Democrats have done a good job of recruiting candidates across the board, thus making those competitive races more appealing to some voters.

Ryan also acknowledged that the rise in Democratic enthusiasm is worrisome for Republicans — especially because Democrats have gotten many low propensity voters to the polls. He's been diving into the early voting data, and his analysis found that many of those primary voters are ones that voted in 2016 — but haven't had a proclivity to vote yet in a midterm year when turnout typically drops off. And nearly a quarter of Democrats who cast early ballots were new voters who just registered in the past two years.

On the GOP side, Ryan found that first-time primary voters only made up about 11 percent of the early vote share, which is a dip from the 2014 midterm primaries. However, on the Democratic side, first time primary voters comprise over nearly a quarter of the early vote — way up from the 14 percent four years ago.

"While I don't think that Texas is going to turn blue this cycle, I do think with these turnout numbers, it could have a significant impact in some races, and some leaning Republican races in November," Ryan said.

Matt Mackowiak, another Republican strategist in the state and chairman of the Travis County GOP, argued that the true test of Democratic enthusiasm will be on Tuesday night. He pointed out that early voting numbers also looked strong for Clinton back in 2016, but that was her high watermark and Election Day voting couldn't match Republican totals.

"For Republicans, if this is evidence of a significant enthusiasm gap, then that would be something to worry about," Mackowiak said. "I'm not sure that it is yet, and just because you have stronger turnout in the primary doesn't mean it translates into Election Day vote in November."

But he admitted that the early numbers should give Republicans some pause and they certainly don't hold any good news if the trend continues on Tuesday.

"There's no way to look at this as positive for Republicans — it's either inconsequential, or it's bad," Mackowiak said. Copyright 2018 NPR. To see more, visit <http://www.npr.org/>.

From: Rebecca Drago [drago@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/7/2018 5:59:30 AM
To: Comm - National [Comm-National@dccc.org]
Subject: Campaign Pro's Morning Score: What happened in the heart of Texas — Biden stumps for Lamb

By Kevin Robillard | 03/07/2018 05:53 AM EDT

With Zach Montellaro, Daniel Strauss, Maggie Severns and Elena Schneider

The first primary night is in the books, and the DCCC has a Texas-sized headache after Laura Moser finished second in the TX-07 primary, advancing to a May 22 runoff even after the committee called her an opportunistic carpet-bagger who threatens the party's chances to knock off Rep. John Culberson.

What does the party do now? Read on ...

— **"Top takeaways from the Texas primary," by POLITICO's Gabe Debenedetti and Elena Schneider:** "The 2018 midterms kicked off in eye-opening fashion in Texas Tuesday, as a series of surprises in Democratic House primaries jolted the landscape while the party's large turnout sent a warning to Republicans nationwide. But the GOP remained in the driver's seat in statewide races throughout Texas by night's end, leaving most of the shocks to down-ballot races. Washington Democrats saw some of their run-off plans go down the drain. Well-funded candidates fell in contest after contest. George P. Bush unexpectedly cruised to victory. And women kept on winning." [Full story.](#)

— **"National Democrats' strategy comes up short in Texas," by POLITICO's Steve Shepard and Elena Schneider:** "In the closing weeks of the campaign, the DCCC posted a memo featuring opposition research about Moser, including her residency, until recently, in Washington. The committee declined to back Fletcher explicitly early Wednesday but did reiterate in a statement its commitment to defeating Culberson, noting that Democrats in the district had picked 'a clear front-runner' and 'are in a strong position to win in November.'" [Full story.](#)

— **We're still waiting on results of the Democratic primary in TX-23.** Former Obama administration official Gina Ortiz Jones is in the runoff after winning 41 percent of the vote on Tuesday. But high school teacher Rick Treviño has a 94-vote lead over Judy Canales for the second spot in the runoff as of press time, with 95 percent of precincts reporting.

TUESDAY'S WINNERS

— **Governor:** GOP Gov. **Greg Abbott (90%)** will face either Democrat Lupe Valdez (43%) or Andrew White (27%).

— **Senate:** GOP Sen. **Ted Cruz (85%)** will face Democratic Rep. **Beto O'Rourke (62%)**.

— **TX-07:** GOP Rep. **John Culberson (76%)** will face either Democrat Lizzie Fletcher (29%) or Laura Moser (24%).

— **TX-23:** GOP Rep. **Will Hurd (81%)** will face either Democrat Gina Jones (41%), Rick Treviño (17%) or Judy Canales (17%).

— **TX-32:** GOP Rep. **Pete Sessions (79%)** will face either Democrat Colin Allred (39%) or Lillian Salerno (18%).

— **TX-02:** Kevin Roberts vs. Dan Crenshaw in Republican runoff, before facing Democrat **Todd Litton**.

— **TX-03:** Republican **Van Taylor** will face either Democrat Lorie Burch or Sam Johnson.

— **TX-05:** Lance Gooden vs. Bunni Pounds in Republican runoff.

— **TX-06:** Ron Wright vs. Jake Ellzey in Republican runoff.

— **TX-16:** Democrat **Veronica Escobar** will face Republican **Rick Seeberger**.

— **TX-21:** Chip Roy vs. Matt McCall in Republican runoff. Winner will face either Mary Wilson or Joseph Kopser.

— **TX-27:** Bech Bruun vs. Michael Cloud in Republican runoff.

— **TX-29:** Democrat **Sylvia Garcia** will face either Phillip Aronoff or Carmen Montiel.

SPECIAL ELECTION SEASON — "'He reminds me of my son Beau': Joe Biden stumps for Conor Lamb," by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: "He reminds me of my Beau because with Beau and with Conor, it's about the other guy," Mr. Biden told a crowd of union workers — and a safety dummy nicknamed 'Rescue Randy' hanging from the rafters — at the Carpenters Training Center in Collier overlooking the Parkway West. ... During his 40-minute speech, Mr. Biden urged his audience to think of the race in broader terms, warning that a late 2017 tax cut passed by Republicans would lead to trillion dollar deficits. Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, he said, had 'already announced' that he hoped to cover those budget holes by 'going to cut Social Security and Medicare.' Mr. Lamb, he said, 'will throw himself in front of a train to prevent that from happening.'" [Full story.](#)

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FRIENDS OF THE PODS — "Franken's replacement tries to turn the page," by Reena Flores: "Sen. Tina Smith doesn't want to talk about Al Franken. When asked about her Franken, the former Democratic senator Minnesota seat amid several allegations of sexual misconduct, she avoided even saying his name in a recent interview with POLITICO's Women Rule podcast, instead concentrating on the economic implications of the #MeToo movement. ... 'I believe it's a cultural change that we're going through as a country, and it's not really a partisan issue,' Smith, Minnesota's former lieutenant governor, told POLITICO. 'But I think that my party, the Democratic party, needs to continue to lead the way in ... paving the path for more economic opportunity for women. And to me, this is really part of that challenge, whether it is paid family leave,; whether it is improved child care.'" Franken's checkered history on sexual harassment is an issue Smith hardly wants to focus on, given her intention to a campaign for office this fall - a feat that can typically take up to two years - even as she acclimates to her new job job. Adding to the task: It's also Smith's her first solo run for elected office." [Full story.](#) [Listen to the podcast here.](#)

— **"Democrats Vow to Go After Republican Governors 'Kowtowing' to Trump," by Edward-Isaac Dove in POLITICO Magazine:** "Jay Inslee wants governors races to become the rallying cry for the resistance to President Donald Trump. "It's a great awakening that we have to fight on a state-by-state basis," the Washington governor and chair of the Democratic Governors Association said in an interview for the latest episode of POLITICO's Off Message podcast. ... "If the Democrats want to use my support for the president and vice president against me, I say bring it on," said Tennessee Rep. Diane Black, a Republican who's running for governor, touting her support for the president wherever she goes. She believes her vote for his tax bill is going to be one of her best weapons. That's exactly the vulnerability Inslee believes Democrats can hit at, even though he continues to advise them to stay away from talking only about Trump himself all the time." [Full story.](#) [Listen to the podcast here.](#)

Days until the 2018 election: 245

Upcoming election dates — Pennsylvania 18th District special election: March 13. **Illinois primaries:** March 20.

Thanks for joining us! You can email tips to the Campaign Pro team at sbland@politico.com, eschneider@politico.com, krobillard@politico.com, dstrauss@politico.com and mseverns@politico.com.

You can also follow us on Twitter: [@politicoscott](https://twitter.com/politicoscott), [@ec_schneider](https://twitter.com/ec_schneider), [@politicokevin](https://twitter.com/politicokevin), [@danielstrauss4](https://twitter.com/danielstrauss4) and [@maggiaseverns](https://twitter.com/maggiaseverns).

Campaign Pro Race Dashboard, POLITICO Pro's campaign tracking solution, is revamped and ready for 2018. Dive into campaigns with biographical candidate pages and a dedicated race dashboard for each House, Senate and gubernatorial contest. You also get access to FEC campaign finance data for federal elections. Get started.

DOWN IN DIXIE — "Bryant 'will not appoint himself' to Senate seat, spokesman says," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss: "Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant's office issued its most direct statement yet on appointing a successor to outgoing Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), saying the governor would not tap himself for the job. "Gov. Bryant will finish out his term. He will not appoint himself, believing it improper to do so," Bryant spokesman Clay Chandler said in a statement...Other names often mentioned as potential appointees include Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves, Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann and state Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith." [Full story.](#)

— **New York Times' Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Jonathan Martin:** "Mike Espy, a former Democratic congressman and agriculture secretary in the Clinton administration, said late Monday that he would consider running for Mr. Cochran's seat. Mr. Espy, who is African-American and from a prominent Delta family, could be a formidable candidate in a state where black voters make up much of the Democratic Party. Democrats are watching which race Mr. McDaniel chooses, hoping to put their most formidable candidate against the state senator." [Full story.](#)

— **What we're hearing:** Don't expect a quick decision on an appointment from Bryant. He's expected to meet with the individual candidates for the job one-on-one in the coming days.

FIRST IN SCORE — SPECIAL ELECTION SEASON — Susan B. Anthony's List super PAC attacks Lamb in digital ads: Susan B. Anthony's List super PAC, an anti-abortion-rights group, is out with a five-figure digital ad and a phone banking program to attack Democrat Conor Lamb for "siding with Pelosi" as a "pro-abortion extremists." [Watch the ad here.](#)

PARTY INFIGHTING WATCH — "Trump finds some friends on tariffs: Red-state Democrats," by POLITICO's Elana Schor: "As Republicans howl that new tariffs could cause an economic meltdown, a handful of Rust Belt Democrats are giving the president a rare serving of praise. His stance could give the trio — Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, all top GOP targets — a chance to tout their bipartisan credentials and defend their home-state metals industries all at once. 'I'm happy to see action being taken,' Casey said in an interview, acknowledging that his alignment with Trump 'doesn't happen that often.'" [Full story.](#)

— **"Senate advances bank deregulation bill as Democrats break ranks," by POLITICO's Zachary Warmbrodt:** "A deep rift between Democrats over banking industry oversight will be on full display on the Senate floor over the coming days, exposing to voters a clash of progressives and centrists that has been building for several years. 'The people in Congress may have forgotten the crash 10 years ago, but I guarantee that people across this country have not forgotten the pain that these giant banks caused,' Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) said as she sought to rally her colleagues against the White House-backed bill. 'They do not want to see Congress move toward deregulating these banks.' ... For those senators driving the legislation, including [North Dakota Democrat Heidi] Heitkamp, Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), it is an opportunity to show that things can still get done in a bitterly divided Congress." [Full story.](#)

— **"'Sex and the City' actress threatens Cuomo's 2020 ambitions," by POLITICO's Edward-Isaac Dove and POLITICO New York's Jimmy Vielkind:** "Cynthia Nixon is unlikely to beat Andrew Cuomo in the New York Democratic primary. But she'll be the biggest demonstration yet of the visceral loathing and distrust of the governor among liberals that will clearly haunt him if he tries to run for president in 2020. The 'Sex and the City' actress is in serious conversations about jumping in and has begun reaching out to potential staffers, according to a person familiar with her plans, though she has not yet pulled the trigger. Though there's been chatter for months that Nixon would run, Cuomo's team was caught by surprise Tuesday, several people close to the governor said, as word spread that she was getting more serious. ... [W]ith New York's very late primary — it's not until mid-September — Nixon will have months to exploit that distrust on a range of issues. Cuomo's 2014 primary challenger, Zephyr Teachout, won more than a third of the vote — without Nixon's star power." [Full story.](#)

MONEY RACE — "Complaint filed against key PAC in Alabama Senate race," by the Associated Press: "A complaint filed Monday accuses a super PAC that spent millions of dollars to support Doug Jones in Alabama's U.S. Senate race of breaking campaign finance law by failing to disclose donors until after the